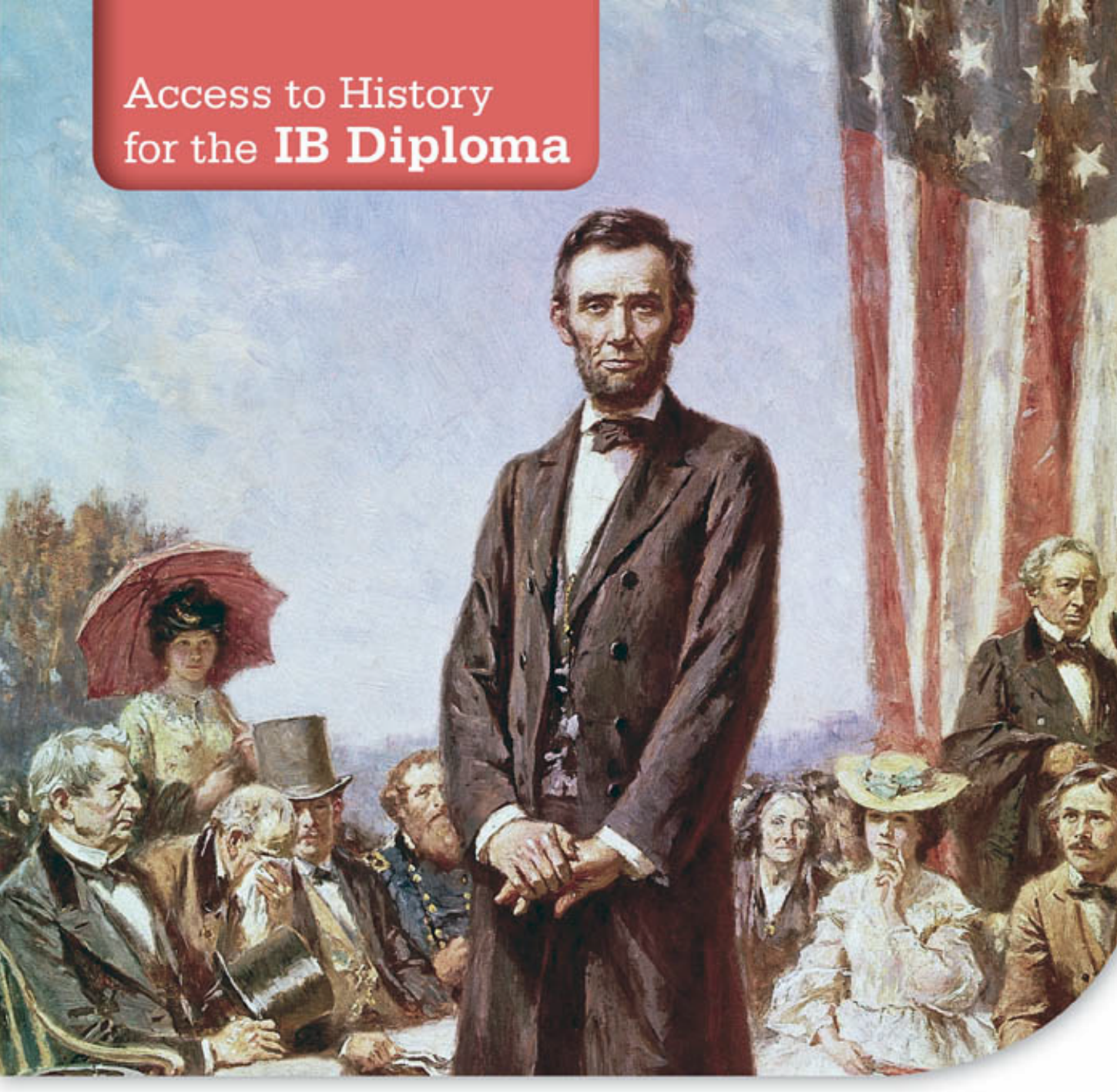
Access to History for the **IB Diploma**



United States Civil War: causes, course and effects 1840–77

Alan Farmer

HODDER EDUCATION

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Dedication

Keith Randell (1943–2002)

The original *Access to History* series was conceived and developed by Keith, who created a series to 'cater for students as they are, not as we might wish them to be'. He leaves a living legacy of a series that for over 20 years has provided a trusted, stimulating and well-loved accompaniment to post-16 study. Our aim with these new editions for the IB is to continue to offer students the best possible support for their studies.

Introduction

This book has been written to support your study of HL option 3: Aspects of the history of the Americas: United States Civil War: causes, course and effects 1840–77 of the IB History Diploma Route 2. This first chapter gives you an overview of:

- the content you will study for United States Civil War: causes, course and effects 1840–77
- how you will be assessed for Paper 3
- the different features of this book and how these will aid your learning.

1 What you will study

The United States Civil War altered the course of American history. The difficult question of slavery was settled once and for all, the country turned towards developing the vast interior, and the economy became increasingly industrial. The Civil War also marked the bloodiest conflict in the history of the country, often pitting brother against brother, and state against state. What led to this war, its course, and what followed remain contentious issues even today so it is no wonder that more books have been written about the war than any other event in the history of the nation.

This book covers the history of the United States in the period during the lead up to the Civil War, its course and Reconstruction after the war. It will:

- begin by examining the nature of the Civil War (Chapter 1)
- look at the significance of the cotton economy and slavery and how this caused the North and South to grow apart (Chapter 2)
- explore the origins of the Civil War by looking at differences between the North and South (Chapter 3)
- examine the abolitionist debate and explain why it became such a powerful force (Chapter 4)
- consider the factors that led to succession and the outbreak of war (Chapter 5)
- explain the course of the war and consider the effectiveness of the leadership of both sides (Chapter 6)
- look at the key battles and explore why the war lasted so long (Chapter 7)
- examine the process and impact of reconstruction (Chapter 8)
- conclude by looking at the position of African Americans during and after Reconstruction (Chapter 9).

2 How you will be assessed

The IB History Diploma Higher Level has three papers in total: Papers 1 and 2 for Standard Level and a further Paper 3 for Higher Level. It also has an internal assessment which all students must do.

- For Paper 1 you need to answer four source-based questions on a prescribed subject. This counts for 20 per cent of your overall marks.
- For Paper 2 you need to answer two essay questions on two different topics. This counts for 25 per cent of your overall marks.
- For Paper 3 you need to answer three essay questions on two or three sections. This counts for 35 per cent of your overall marks.

For the internal assessment you need to carry out a historical investigation. This counts for 20 per cent of your overall marks

HL option 3: Aspects of the history of the Americas is assessed through Paper 3. You must study three sections out of a choice of twelve, one of which could be United States Civil War: causes, course and effects 1840–77. These sections are assessed through Paper 3 of the IB History diploma which has 24 essay questions – two for each of the twelve sections. In other words, there will be two specific questions that you can answer based on the Civil War.

Examination questions

For Paper 3 you need to answer three of the 24 questions. You could either answer two on one of the sections you have studied and one on another section, or one from each of the three sections you have studied. So, assuming the United States Civil War is one of the sections you have studied, you may choose to answer one or two questions on it.

The questions are not divided up by section but just run 1–24 and are usually arranged chronologically. In the case of the questions on the United States Civil War, you should expect numbers five and six to be on this particular section. When the exam begins, you will have five minutes in which to read the questions. You are not allowed to use a pen or highlighter during the reading period. Scan the list of question but focus on the ones relating to the sections you have studied.

Remember you are to write on the history of the Americas. If a question such as, 'Discuss the impact of the Second World War on the society of one country of the region', is asked do **not** write about Germany or Japan. You will receive no credit for this answer.

Command terms

When choosing the three questions, keep in mind that you must answer the question asked, not one you might have hoped for. A key to success is understanding the demands of the question. IB History diploma questions

use key terms and phrases known as command terms. The more common command terms are listed in the table below, with a brief definition of each. More are listed in the appendix of the IB History Guide.

Examples of questions using some of the more common command terms and specific strategies to answer them are included at the end of Chapters 2–9.

Command term	Description	Where exemplified in this book
Analyse	Investigate the various components of a given issue.	Pages 30–2
Assess	Very similar to 'evaluate'. Raise the various sides to an argument but clearly state which are more important and why.	Page 254
Compare and contrast	Discuss both similarities and differences of two events, people, etc.	Pages 48–50
Evaluate	Make a judgement while looking at two or more sides of an issue.	Pages 79–81
Explain	Describe clearly reasons for an event, development or a process.	Pages 116–18
In what ways and with what effects	Be sure to include both ways and effects in your answer – that is how an event took place and what the repercussions were.	Pages 199–200
To what extent	Discuss the various merits of a given argument or opinion.	Pages 160–2
Why	Explain the reasons for something that took place. Provide several reasons.	Pages 235–7

Answering the questions

You have two and a half hours to answer the three questions, or 50 minutes each. Try to budget your time wisely. In other words, do not spend 75 minutes on one answer. Before you begin each essay, take five to seven minutes and compose an outline of the major points you will raise in your essay. These you can check off as you write the essay itself. This is not a waste of time and will bring organisation and coherency to what you write. Well-organised essays that include an introduction, several well-supported arguments and a concluding statement are much more likely to score highly than essays which jump from point to point without structure.

The three essays you write for Paper 3 will be read by a trained examiner. The examiner will read your essays and check what you write against the IB mark scheme. This mark scheme offers guidance to the examiner but is not comprehensive. You may well write an essay that includes analysis and evidence not included in the mark scheme and that is fine. It is also worth remembering that the examiner who will mark your essay is looking to

reward well-defended and argued positions, not to deduct marks for misinformation.

Each of your essays will be marked on a 0–20 scale, for a total of 60 points. The total score will be weighted as 35 per cent of your final IB History. Do bear in mind that you are not expected to score 60/60 to earn a 7: 37–39/60 will equal a 7. Another way of putting this is that if you write three essays that each score 13, you will receive a 7.

Writing essays

In order to attain the highest mark band (18–20), your essays should:

- be clearly focused
- address all implications of the question
- demonstrate extensive historical knowledge
- demonstrate knowledge of historical processes such as continuity and change
- integrate your analysis
- be well structured
- have well-developed synthesis.

Your essay should include an introduction in which you set out your main points. Do not waste time copying the question but define the key terms stated in the question. The best essays probe the demands of the question. In other words, there are often different ways of interpreting the question.

Next, you should write an in-depth analysis of your main points in several paragraphs. Here you will provide evidence that supports your argument. Each paragraph should focus on one of your main points and relate directly to the question. More sophisticated responses include counter-arguments.

Finally, you should end with a concluding statement.

In the roughly 45 minutes you spend on one essay, you should be able to write three to six pages. While there is no set minimum, you do need explore the issues and provide sufficient evidence to support what you write. In history essays, do not use the words 'I' or 'you'. It is better to create a more neutral and dispassionate argument. Bringing supporting evidence to bear on answering the question will be how your essay will be marked.

At the end of Chapters 2–9, you will find IB-style questions with guidance on how best to answer them. Each question focuses on a different command term. It goes without saying that the more practice you have writing essays, the better your results will be.

The appearance of the examination paper

Cover

The cover of the examination paper states the date of the examination and the length of time you have to complete it: 2 hours 30 minutes. Please note

that there are two routes in history. Make sure your paper says Route 2 on it. Instructions are limited and simply state that you should not open it until told to do so and that three questions must be answered.

Questions

You will have five minutes in which to read through the questions. It is very important to choose the three questions you can answer most fully. It is quite possible that two of the three questions may be on the United States Civil War, especially after mastering the material in this book. That is certainly permissible. After the five minutes' reading time is over, you can take out your pen and mark up the exam booklet:

- Circle the three you have decided to answer.
- Identify the command terms and important points. For example, if a question asked, 'To what extent was the defeat of the South in the United States Civil War due to its inferior industrial resources and smaller population?' underline To what extent and inferior industrial resources and smaller population. This will help you to focus on the demands of the question.

For each essay take five to seven minutes to write an outline and approximately 43–45 minutes to write the essay.

3 About this book

Coverage of the course content

This book addresses the key areas listed in the IB History Guide for Route 2: HL option 3: Aspects of the history of the Americas: United States Civil War: causes, course and effects 1840–77. Chapters start with an introduction outlining key questions they address. They are then divided into a series of sections and topics covering the course content.

Throughout the chapters you will find the following features to aid your study of the course content.

Key and leading questions

Each section heading in the chapter has a related key question which gives a focus to your reading and understanding of the section. These are also listed in the chapter introduction. You should be able to answer the questions after completing the relevant section.

Topics within the sections have leading questions which are designed to help you to focus on the key points within a topic and give you more practice in answering questions.

Key terms

Key terms are the important terms you need to know to gain an understanding of the period. These are emboldened in the text the first time they appear in the book and are defined in the margin. They also appear in the glossary at the end of the book.

Profiles

Some of the chapters contain profiles of important individuals. These include a brief biography and information about the importance and impact of the individual. This information can be very useful in understanding certain events and providing supporting evidence to your arguments.

Sources

Throughout the book are several written and visual sources. Historical sources are important components in understanding more fully why specific decisions were taken or on what contemporary writers and politicians based their actions. The sources are accompanied by questions to help you to dig more deeply into the history of the Civil War.

Key debates

Historians often disagree on historical events and this historical debate is referred to as historiography. Knowledge of historiography is helpful in reaching the upper mark bands when you take your IB History examinations. You should not merely drop the names of historians in your essay. You need to understand the different points of view for a given historiographical debate. These you can bring up in your essay. There are a number of key debates throughout the book to develop your understanding of historiography.

Theory of Knowledge (TOK) questions

Understanding that different historians see history differently is an important element in understanding the connection between the IB History Diploma and Theory of Knowledge. Alongside many of the debates is a Theory of Knowledge style question which makes that link.

Summary diagrams

At the end of each section or chapter is a summary diagram which gives a visual summary of the content of the section. It is intended as an aid for revision.

Chapter summaries

At the end of each chapter is a short summary of the content of that chapter. This is intended to help you to revise and consolidate your knowledge and understanding of the content.

Skills development

At the end of each chapter is the following:

- Examination guidance on how to answer questions. This advice focuses on different command terms and gives guidance on how to approach an answer to example questions.
- Examination practice in the form of Paper 3 style questions.

End of the book

The book concludes with the following sections:

Timeline

This gives a timeline of the major events covered in the book, which is helpful for quick reference or as a revision tool.

Glossary

All key terms in the book are defined in the glossary.

Further reading

This contains a list of books and websites which may help you with further independent research and presentations. It may also be helpful when further information is required for internal assessments and extended essays in history. You may wish to share the contents of this area with your school or local librarian.

Internal assessment

All IB History diploma students are required to write a historical investigation which is internally assessed. The investigation is an opportunity for you to dig more deeply into a subject that interests you.

CHAPTER 1

The American Civil War

In April 1861, Confederate guns opened fire on Fort Sumter, situated on an island in Charleston harbour. These were the first shots of the American Civil War. Americans have tended to regard the Civil War as *the* great topic in American history – an event that helped to define modern America. Writer Shelby Foote saw the war as a watershed: before the war, he thought that the collection of 'United' States were an 'are'; after the war the USA became an 'is'. (Foote might have added that had the Confederates won, the USA would have become a 'was'.) No other topic in American history has had so much written about it. In this introductory chapter you will consider:

- How successful was the 'Great Experiment' pre-1861?
- Should the war be called a 'civil war'?
- Was the Civil War irrepressible?
- To what extent was the South to blame for the Civil War?

1 The success of the 'great experiment'

Key question: How successful was the 'great experiment' pre-1861?

Before 1861, the history of the United States had been in many ways a remarkable success story. The small, predominantly English settlements of the early seventeenth century had expanded rapidly, so much so that by the end of the eighteenth century they had been able to win independence from Britain. The United States, which in 1776 had controlled only a narrow strip of land along the Atlantic seaboard, expanded westwards. In 1802–3, the United States doubled in size when it purchased the Louisiana territory from France (see map, page 14). By 1860, the original 13 states had increased to 33 and the nation extended from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

By 1860, white Americans enjoyed a better standard of living than any other people on earth. Prosperity and the rapidly expanding economy attracted large-scale immigration. In 1860, the USA had a population of 31 million people (slightly more than Britain); 4 million were foreign-born.

The USA's political system – **republican**, **federal** and **democratic** – was the pride of most Americans and the envy of most British and European radicals. By the mid-nineteenth century, many Americans considered themselves to be the world's most civilised and fortunate people.

KEY TERM

Republican A form of government without a monarch (or someone who supports such a government).

Federal A government in which several states, while largely independent in home affairs, combine for national purposes.

Democratic A form of government in which ultimate power is vested in the people and their elected representatives.

What were the failings of the 'great experiment'?

American failure

Not everyone benefited from the **'great experiment'**:

- During the 250 years that had elapsed since the coming of the first English settlers, Native Americans had lost a huge amount of land.
- The other major ethnic group that might have questioned the notion of a 'great experiment' were African Americans, whose ancestors had been transported to America as slaves. The fact that slavery continued in the American South was a great anomaly in a country based on the **Declaration of Independence**'s assertion 'that all men are created equal'.

In the opinion of many Northerners, the fact that slavery still existed was the major failing of the 'great experiment'.

If slavery was the USA's main failing pre-1861, the Civil War (1861–5) remains the greatest failure in US history. Some 620,000 Americans were to die in the conflict, as many as in almost all America's subsequent wars put together.

KEY TERM

'Great experiment' Americans saw themselves as doing things differently from, and more successfully than, the rest of the world. The USA was thus an example for other countries to follow.

Declaration of Independence Thirteen American colonies declared independence from Britain on 4 July 1776.

Confederate Supporter of the Southern states that seceded from the Union in 1861.

2 Civil war?

Key question: Should the war be called a 'civil war'?

Since 1861, scholars have argued over a name for the conflict. Most called it a civil war at the time. And it was a civil war in states like Missouri and Kentucky where brother sometimes did fight brother. However, this was not the norm. In general, the war was waged by two separate regions: most Northerners were on the Union (or Federal) side and most Southerners on the **Confederate** (or rebel) side. Moreover, the term civil war implies that two different groups were fighting for control of a single government. In reality the Confederacy was seeking to exist independently.

After 1865, Southerners frequently called the conflict 'The War Between the States'. This title was not quite correct: the contest was waged not by states but by two organised governments: the Union and the Confederacy.

Northerners sometimes referred to the conflict as 'The War of the Rebellion'. However, the struggle, fought by two governments respecting the rules of war, was more than a rebellion. Other names occasionally used to describe the conflict include 'The War for Southern Independence', 'The Confederate War' and 'The War for Secession'.

It should be said that virtually everyone now calls the conflict the Civil War. This book will be no exception.

3 North versus South

Key question: Was the Civil War irrepressible?

By withdrawing from the Union in 1860–1, the Southern states were embarking on a course of nation-making. Southerners came to believe that the South possessed a character quite distinct from that of the North, distinct enough to qualify their region (or section) for separate nationhood. However, it may be that the Civil War had more to do with developing Southern nationalism than Southern nationalism had to do with bringing about the Civil War. Arguably there was more uniting than dividing North and South in 1861. White Northerners and Southerners spoke the same language, had the same religion and shared the same legal system, political culture and pride in their common heritage. Most also held similar, racist, views, accepting without question that blacks were inferior to whites. Common economic interest seemed to bind the two together. 'In brief and in short', said Senator Thomas Hart Benson of Missouri, 'the two halves of the Union were made for each other, as much as Adam and Eve'.

In the mid-twentieth century, some historians were convinced that, given these similarities, civil war was far from 'irrepressible' or inevitable. Historians, like James Randall and Avery Craven, blamed a small minority of extremists – Northern **abolitionists** and Southern **'fire-eaters'** – for raising tensions in the years before 1861, and blamed blundering politicians for failing to find a solution to the 'impending crisis'.

Most historians today tend to absolve the politicians. They stress that Northerners and Southerners were deeply divided. In particular, they held irreconcilable views about slavery – especially the desirability of its expansion. Thus, the Civil War was – to a large extent – 'irrepressible'.

KEY TERM

Abolitionist Someone who wanted to end slavery in the USA.

'Fire-eaters' Southerners who wanted to leave the Union.

Secede To leave or quit.

4 Southern guilt?

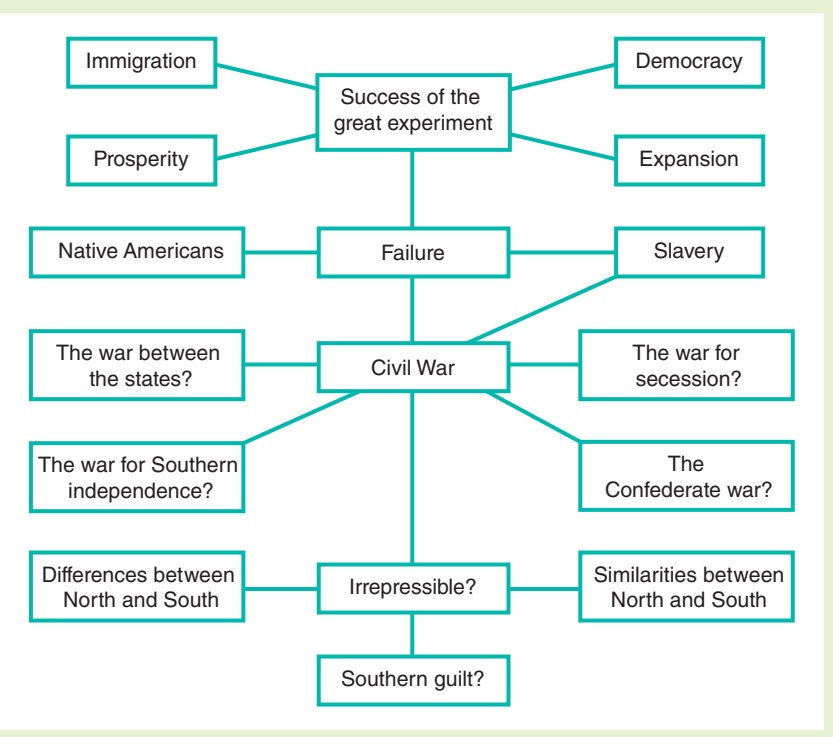
Key question: To what extent was the South to blame for the Civil War?

With hindsight, it was Southern, rather than Northern, politicians who blundered into war in 1861. After Lincoln's election success in 1860 many Southerners determined to **secede** from the Union, embarking on a course of action that was always likely to lead to war – and a war that they were always likely to lose. This was apparent to some Southerners and most Northerners in 1861. It is thus fair to point the finger of blame at Southern leaders and the Southern electorate.

There are many similarities between Southern actions in 1861 and Japanese actions in 1941. Both Southerners and Japanese felt that they had been pushed into a corner from which there was no honourable escape. Ignoring the likely outcome of their actions, both fired the first shots: Southerners at Fort Sumter in 1861, the Japanese at Pearl Harbor in 1941. By so doing they succeeded in provoking conflict and uniting against them the whole of the United States in 1941 and what remained of the United States in 1861.

Winston Churchill commented that the Japanese, by attacking Britain and the USA, had embarked on 'a very considerable undertaking'. The same could be said of the South's decision to risk war in 1861. As a result, one in four white male Southerners of military age died, and slavery – the institution that Southerners had gone to war to defend – ended.

Why the South acted as impulsively as it did is a central issue of this book. Why it was defeated is another. And what happened as a result of that defeat is a third.



SUMMARY DIAGRAM

The American Civil War

CHAPTER 2

The cotton economy and slavery

By the mid-nineteenth century, most Americans were proud of the achievements of their country and optimistic about its future. However, there was a threatening cloud on the horizon. This was the fact that Northern and Southern states were growing apart, economically, socially, culturally and politically. The main reason for this was the 'peculiar institution' of slavery. This chapter examines the following key questions:

- How successful was the USA in the early nineteenth century?
- What was the nature of the peculiar institution?
- Was slavery in the USA a system of ruthless exploitation or a paternalistic arrangement?

1 The 'great experiment'

Key question: How successful was the USA in the early nineteenth century?

'A people of plenty'?

To what extent were mid-nineteenth-century Americans a 'people of plenty'?

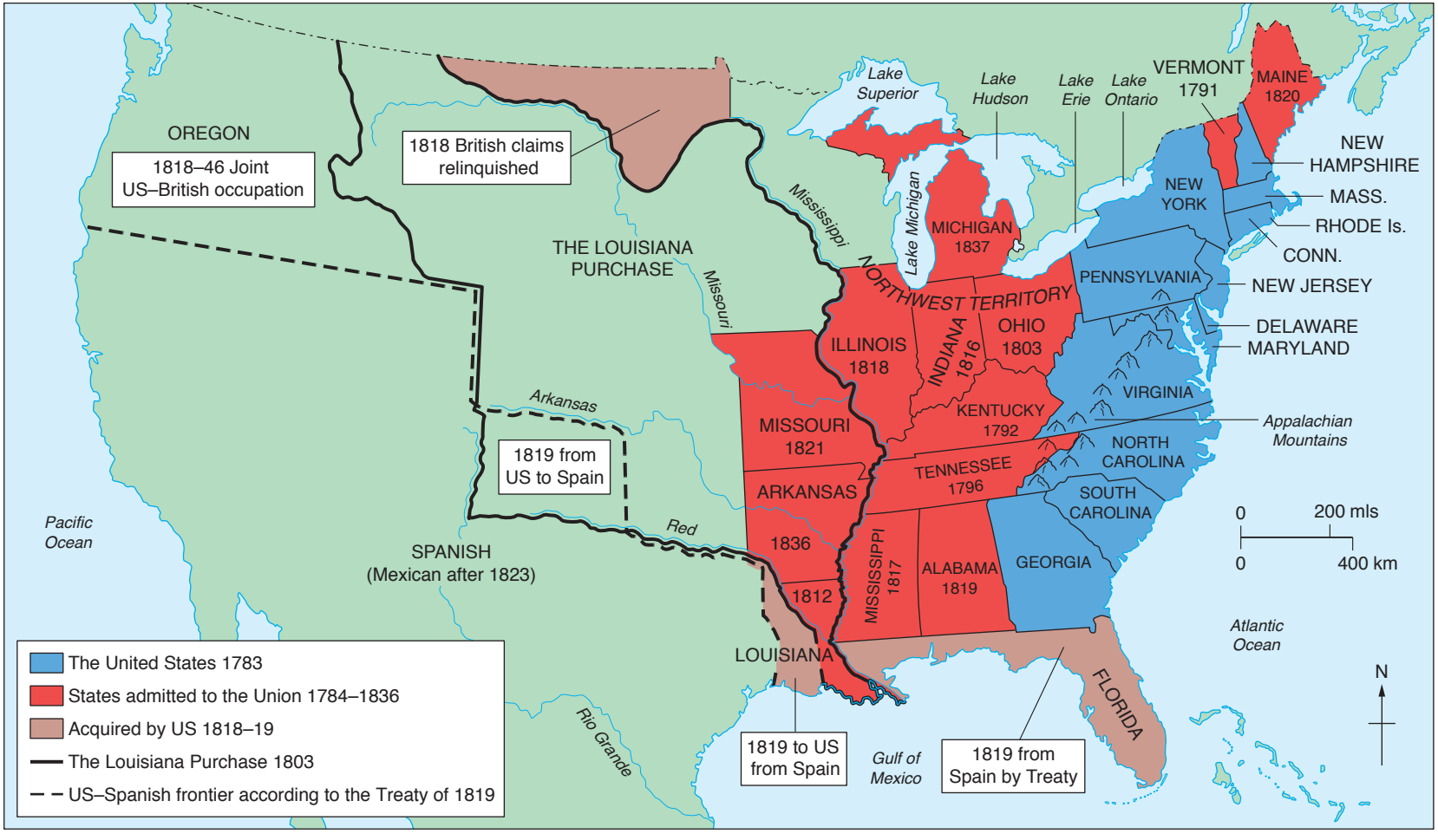
Historian David Potter described mid-nineteenth-century Americans as a 'people of plenty'. Prosperity and growth seem to be the two words that best describe America's economic development in the early nineteenth century. The country had enormous reserves of almost every commodity – fertile land, timber, minerals – and an excellent network of navigable rivers. In the period 1800–50 the USA's gross national product increased seven-fold and per capita income doubled.

Population growth

The USA's population grew rapidly, doubling every 25 years or so. In 1840 it stood at 17 million; by 1860 it had reached 31 million. Most of the growth came from natural increase: plenty of children were born and Americans lived longer than most people in the world. Population growth was also the result of immigration, especially from Ireland and Germany. The population was mobile. Some Americans moved to find work in the towns. Others moved westwards to settle new land.

Western expansion

In the early nineteenth century Americans populated the area between the Appalachian Mountains and the Mississippi River. Between 1815 and 1850, the population west of the Appalachians grew three times as quickly as the population of the original thirteen states. By 1850, one in two Americans lived west of the Appalachians. Many moved west – and west again. Abraham Lincoln's family was typical. Abraham's father was born in Virginia



The expanding frontier 1783–1840

in 1778: in 1782 he was taken to Kentucky, where Abraham was born in 1809. In 1816, the Lincoln family moved to Indiana. In 1831 Abraham moved to Illinois.

In the 1840s, Americans began crossing the Great Plains and the Rocky Mountains to settle in California and the Oregon Territory on the Pacific coast.

Agriculture

Most Americans were farmers. Small family farms still characterised agriculture, north and south, east and west. Between 1840 and 1860, food production increased four-fold. This was mainly due to the opening up of new tracts of land in the west. The development of more scientific techniques – fertilisation, crop rotation, the use of new machinery – also helped.

Transport

Massive changes in transport help to explain the agricultural – and industrial – changes that were underway. The development of steamboats revolutionised travel on the great rivers. By 1850, there were over 700 steamships operating on the Mississippi and its tributaries. The country also developed an impressive canal system. However, by 1850 canals were facing competition from railways. In 1840, the USA had over 3,000 miles of track. By 1860 this had increased to over 30,000 miles – more track than the rest of the world combined.

Industrialisation

America's industrial revolution mirrored that of Britain. There were important technological developments in textiles, coal, iron and steel, and in the use of steam power. New machines were introduced and constantly improved. The USA, fortunate in its enormous mineral wealth, could also count on British investment.

Urbanisation

Fewer than one in ten Americans lived in towns (defined as settlements with more than 2,500 people) in 1820: one in five did so by 1860. Some cities experienced spectacular growth. Chicago, with only 40 people in 1830, had 109,000 by 1860. New York had over 800,000 inhabitants by 1860.

KEY TERM

Feudal hierarchy A system of social organisation prevalent in Western Europe in the Middle Ages. People held a range of positions within a rigid class system.

American Dream The idea that the American way of life offers the prospect of economic and social success to every individual.

A society of equals?

To what extent was the USA 'a society of equals'?

In the 1830s, a perceptive Frenchman, Alexis de Tocqueville, visited the USA and wrote a book recounting his experiences. What struck him was the fact that the country was far more equal than societies in Europe. He noted that there was no **feudal hierarchy**: no sovereign, no established aristocracy or Church leaders. Instead there were opportunities for men of talent and ambition to rise to the top.

Historians today are suspicious of this early notion of the **American Dream**. Black slaves, Native Americans and women were far from equal. Moreover,

there were great inequalities of wealth among white males. In 1860, the top 5 per cent of free adult males owned 53 per cent of the wealth. The bottom 50 per cent owned only one per cent. Family standing and inherited wealth were vital assets in terms of individual advancement in America, as in most European societies.

Rags to riches

De Tocqueville's claim did have some basis. Compared with Europe, there was rapid social mobility in the USA and opportunities for those with luck and ability. Men like Cornelius Vanderbilt (who made his fortune in transport) and Cyrus McCormick (associated with farm machinery) did rise from 'rags to riches'. The American dream attracted millions of immigrants to the USA in the nineteenth century. By no means all prospered. But enough did so to keep the dream alive.

Women's status

Mid-nineteenth-century America assigned distinctly unequal roles to men and women. Women were seen, and saw themselves, as home-makers. Only a quarter of white women worked outside the home pre-marriage and fewer than 5 per cent did so while they were married. The notion that women's place was in the home was disseminated by both the Church and the growing media industry.

Today, historians debate the extent to which the **'cult of domesticity'** was a setback for women. Many would claim it was. Women were denied the same social and political rights as men. They could not vote. In many states wives could not even own property.

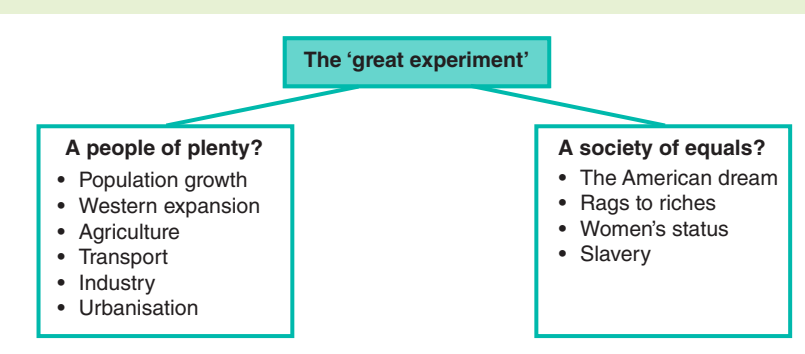
However, some historians have argued that the cult of domesticity actually gave women some power. They had responsibility for their children. (By 1850 the average white woman had five children.) Often seen as the guardians of morality, women tended to set family values and were greater church-goers than men. Middle-class women participated in many of the reform movements that were a feature of mid-nineteenth century American life, for example **abolitionism** and **temperance**.

KEY TERM

'Cult of domesticity' The notion that women's place was in the home.

Abolitionism The desire to end slavery.

Temperance Opposition to the drinking of alcohol.



SUMMARY DIAGRAM

The 'great experiment'

2 The peculiar institution

Key question: What was the nature of the peculiar institution?

The settlement of North America was an African as well as a European enterprise. In 1619, a year before the Pilgrim Fathers set sail in the *Mayflower*, John Rolfe in Virginia reported 'about the last of August came in a Dutch man-of-war that sold us 20 negars'. As Rolfe makes clear, the score of Africans in 1619 had not crossed the Atlantic by choice. They came as slaves. This was the experience of virtually all Africans who were shipped to America in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In 1808, the USA declared the African slave trade illegal. But by then there were about 1 million slaves already in the USA and the slave population continued to expand naturally. Slavery divided Americans, North and South. It continues to divide historians. Indeed, perhaps no issue in American history has generated as much controversy.

Cotton and slavery

Why were cotton and slavery interlinked?

Slavery pre-1800

In 1776, slavery existed in all the thirteen colonies. However, it was of major importance only in the South, largely because the Northern climate was not suited to **plantation agriculture**. In the last decades of the eighteenth century radical Protestants, especially Quakers, condemned slavery as a moral evil. Other Americans thought it inconsistent with enlightened ideas that stressed liberty, equality and free enterprise. After 1776, Northern states abolished slavery, some at a stroke, others gradually. In 1787, Congress passed an **ordinance** that kept slavery out of the North West Territory. Even some Southerners regarded slavery as an evil. A few, like George Washington, freed their slaves (even if posthumously).

The importance of cotton

'King Cotton' ensured that slavery survived and throve. In 1790, only 9,000 bales of cotton were produced in the USA. Eli Whitney's invention of a cotton engine (or 'gin') in 1793 revolutionised Southern agriculture. It enabled short-fibre cotton (the only cotton which easily grew in the South) to be quickly separated from its seed. Suddenly, it became highly profitable to grow cotton and Southern farmers cashed in. By the 1830s, the South was producing 2 million bales per year.

Cotton soon outstripped all other plantation crops in economic importance. From 1815 to 1860, cotton represented more than 50 per cent of all US exports. Such was the demand (mainly from textile manufacturers in Britain), and such were the profits, that the cotton belt spread westwards – to Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas and Texas. Cotton

KEY TERM

Plantation agriculture Sugar, rice, tobacco and cotton were grown on large Southern estates.

Ordinance A regulation or law.

'King Cotton' Cotton was so important to the American economy that it became known as 'King Cotton'. 'No power on earth dares to make war on cotton', declared Senator James Hammond in 1858. 'Cotton is king.'

production needed a large amount of unskilled labour. Slave labour was ideal. Cotton and slavery, therefore, were interlinked. Southerners migrating westwards either took their slaves with them or purchased surplus 'stock', mainly from the upper South. In the 50 years before 1860, perhaps 1 million slaves relocated from the upper South to the lower South and from south-eastern to south-western slave states.

Gang labour

Gang labour quickly became the defining feature of the cotton plantation system. Slaves were organised into groups based on their physical abilities. The groups were supervised by an overseer (usually white) and a driver (usually black) who were prepared to use the whip if workers fell behind the pace.

Southern commitment to slavery

Most Southerners were committed to their **peculiar institution**. The **Founding Fathers** had realised that they could not tamper with slavery in the South. While they had avoided using the word 'slave', they acknowledged slavery's existence. Slaves were accepted, for representation and taxation purposes, as three-fifths of a free person. Events in Haiti in the 1790s and early 1800s, where slaves had won their freedom, massacring much of the white population in the process, convinced Southerners that slavery must be maintained as a means of social control.

KEY TERM

Peculiar institution White Southerners referred to slavery as their 'peculiar' institution. By this they meant that it was special to – and characteristic of – their region.

Founding Fathers The men who drew up the Constitution in 1787.

How harsh was American slavery?

The conditions of enslavement

Historians continue to debate the nature of the peculiar institution. They have a considerable number of sources with which to work – plantation records, census returns, newspapers, diaries, travellers' accounts and political speeches. Unfortunately, there is limited evidence from the slaves themselves, few of whom were literate. The best accounts of what it was like to experience slavery were written by fugitive slaves, some of whom became leading abolitionists. Such men and women were not typical slaves. While there are large numbers of reminiscences resulting from interviews with ex-slaves, conducted in the 1930s, these accounts are flawed by the fact that those who provided their recollections had only experienced slavery as children and their memories may well have been faulty.

One problem facing historians is that slavery changed over time: it was not necessarily the same in the 1850s as it was in the 1810s. It also varied considerably from place to place, depending in part on the nature of the local economy. Slavery in Delaware, where only one family in 30 owned a slave, for example, was different from slavery in South Carolina, where one family in two owned a slave. Moreover, a slave's experience, whether in Delaware or South Carolina, very much depended on the slaveholder. Consequently, generalisations are difficult to make and exceptions can be found to almost every rule. Perhaps the only thing that can be said with certainty is that slavery was a system of many systems.

Statistical evidence

The census returns of 1850 and 1860 provide a starting point for trying to understand the nature of slavery:

- In 1850, there were about 3.2 million slaves (compared to 6.2 million whites) in the fifteen Southern states. By 1860 there were nearly 4 million slaves (compared to 8 million whites).
- Slaves were concentrated mainly in the lower South. Slaves outnumbered whites in South Carolina.
- In 1850, one in three white Southern families owned slaves. By 1860, as a result of the rising cost of slaves, one family in four were slave owners.
- In 1860, 88 per cent of slaveholders owned fewer than twenty slaves and 50 per cent owned no more than five slaves. However, over 50 per cent of slaves lived on plantations with over twenty slaves. Thus the 'typical' slaveholder did not own the 'typical' slave.
- Most slaves were held by about 10,000 families; 3,000 families had over 100 slaves.
- Fifty-five per cent of slaves worked in cotton production, 10 per cent in tobacco and 10 per cent in sugar, rice and hemp, while 15 per cent were domestic servants.
- In 1860, about 10 per cent of slaves lived in towns or worked in a variety of industries.
- Slaves were sometimes hired out to other employers for parts of the year. In towns, some slaves, with particular skills, hired themselves out.

Slave codes

All slave states had codes – laws which emphasised that slaves were property and which greatly restricted their behaviour. The codes varied from state to state but usually laid down that slaves could not:

- leave plantations without authorisation
- carry weapons
- strike a white person.

To enforce the codes, militia-like patrols were set up. Free white men served for one-, three- or six-month periods, policing their local areas.

Free blacks

Not all African Americans were slaves. By 1860 there were about 260,000 free blacks in the South:

- Some had made enough money to purchase their freedom.
- Many were of mixed race and had been given their freedom by their white fathers.

Southern free blacks had to carry documentation proving their freedom at all times or risk the danger of being enslaved. They had no political rights and their legal status was precarious. Job opportunities were also limited. Nevertheless a few prospered. In Charleston in 1860 there were 360

'coloured' taxpayers and 130 of these owned 390 slaves. In New Orleans, free blacks owned over $15 million worth of property.

Two hundred thousand blacks, some of whom had escaped from slavery in the South, lived in the North. Many Northern whites were as racially prejudiced as Southerners. Thus Northern blacks usually had the worst jobs and **segregation** was common in most aspects of life. Only three states allowed blacks to vote on terms of parity with whites in 1860. Some Northern states tried to exclude blacks altogether. However, a number of politicians in the decades before the Civil War worked to expand black rights. By 1861, Northern blacks had more rights than at any time in the previous 30 years.

KEY TERM

Segregation The system whereby blacks and whites are separated from each other (for example in schools) on grounds of race.

SOURCE A

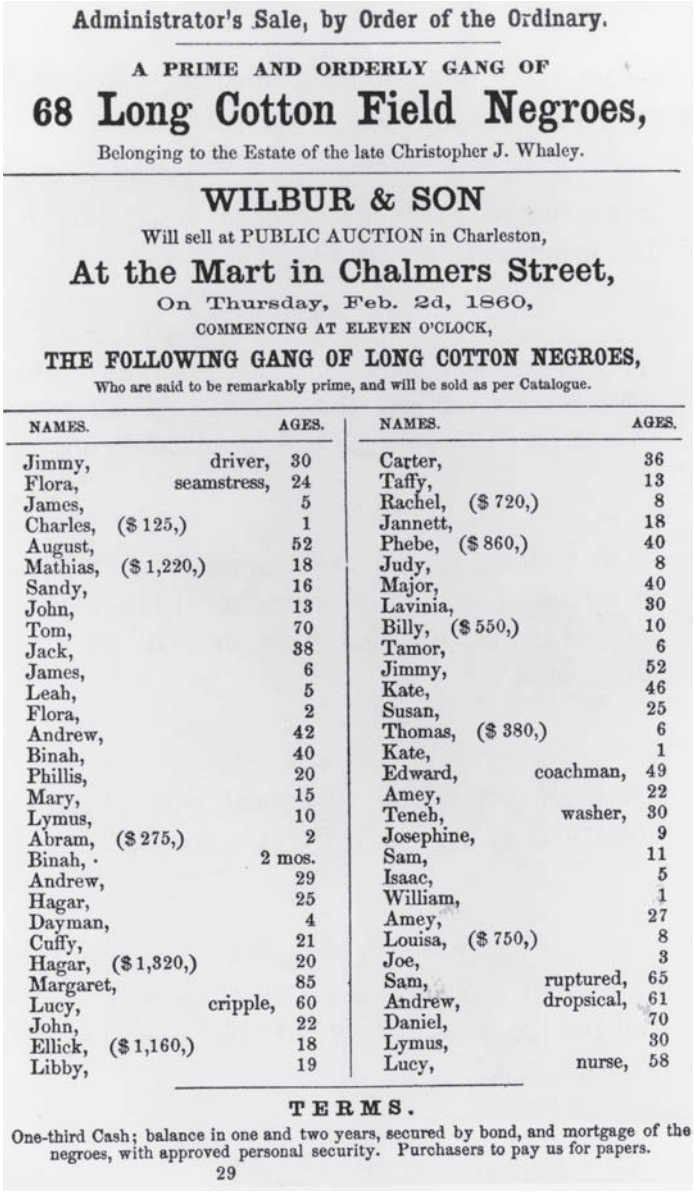
Population distribution in 1860

	White	Slave	Free black	Total
Border slaveholding states				
Delaware	90,589 (80.7%)	1,798 (1.6%)	19,829 (17.7%)	112,216
Kentucky	919,484 (79.6%)	225,483 (19.5%)	10,684 (0.9%)	1,155,651
Maryland	515,918 (75.1%)	87,189 (12.7%)	83,942 (12.2%)	687,049
Missouri	1,063,489 (90.0%)	114,931 (9.7%)	3,572 (0.3%)	1,181,992
Total	2,589,480 (82.5%)	429,401 (13.7%)	118,027 (3.8%)	3,136,908
Eleven future Confederate states				
Alabama	526,271 (54.6%)	435,080 (45.1%)	2,690 (0.3%)	964,041
Arkansas	324,143 (74.4%)	111,115 (25.5%)	114 (0.1%)	435,402
Florida	77,747 (55.4%)	61,745 (44.0%)	932 (0.7%)	140,424
Georgia	591,550 (56.0%)	462,198 (43.7%)	3,500 (0.3%)	1,057,248
Louisiana	357,456 (50.5%)	331,726 (46.9%)	18,647 (2.6%)	707,829
Mississippi	353,899 (44.7%)	436,631 (55.2%)	773 (0.1%)	791,303
North Carolina	629,942 (63.5%)	331,059 (33.4%)	30,463 (3.1%)	991,464
South Carolina	291,300 (41.4%)	402,406 (57.2%)	9,914 (1.4%)	703,620
Tennessee	826,722 (74.5%)	275,719 (24.9%)	7,300 (0.7%)	1,109,741
Texas	420,891 (69.7%)	182,566 (30.2%)	355 (0.1%)	603,812
Virginia	1,047,299 (65.5%)	490,865 (30.8%)	58,042 (3.6%)	1,596,206
Total	5,447,220 (59.9%)	3,521,110 (38.7%)	132,760 (1.5%)	9,101,090

? Look at Source A. Which three states were most likely to be committed to defending slavery?

SOURCE B

Notice of Slave Sale, 1852



Administrator's Sale, by Order of the Ordinary.

A PRIME AND ORDERLY GANG OF

68 Long Cotton Field Negroes,

Belonging to the Estate of the late Christopher J. Whaley.

WILBUR & SON

Will sell at PUBLIC AUCTION in Charleston,

At the Mart in Chalmers Street,

On Thursday, Feb. 2d, 1860,

COMMENCING AT ELEVEN O'CLOCK,

THE FOLLOWING GANG OF LONG COTTON NEGROES,

Who are said to be remarkably prime, and will be sold as per Catalogue.

NAMES.		AGES.
Jimmy,	driver,	30
Flora,	seamstress,	24
James,		5
Charles,	($ 125,)	1
August,		52
Mathias,	($ 1,220,)	18
Sandy,		16
John,		13
Tom,		70
Jack,		38
James,		6
Leah,		5
Flora,		2
Andrew,		42
Binah,		40
Phillis,		20
Mary,		15
Lymus,		10
Abram,	($ 275,)	2
Binah,		2 mos.
Andrew,		29
Hagar,		25
Dayman,		4
Cuffy,		21
Hagar,	($ 1,320,)	20
Margaret,		85
Lucy,	cripple,	60
John,		22
Ellick,	($ 1,160,)	18
Libby,		19

NAMES.		AGES.
Carter,		36
Taffy,		13
Rachel,	($ 720,)	8
Jannett,		18
Phebe,	($ 860,)	40
Judy,		8
Major,		40
Lavinia,		30
Billy,	($ 550,)	10
Tamor,		6
Jimmy,		52
Kate,		46
Susan,		25
Thomas,	($ 380,)	6
Kate,		1
Edward,	coachman,	49
Amey,		22
Teneb,	washer,	30
Josephine,		9
Sam,		11
Isaac,		5
William,		1
Amey,		27
Louisa,	($ 750,)	8
Joe,		3
Sam,	ruptured,	65
Andrew,	dropsical,	61
Daniel,		70
Lymus,		30
Lucy,	nurse,	58

TERMS.

One-third Cash; balance in one and two years, secured by bond, and mortgage of the negroes, with approved personal security. Purchasers to pay us for papers.

29

What does Source B tell us about:

a) the nature of slavery and
b) Christopher J. Whaley?

Slavery comparisons

How did slavery in the USA compare with slavery elsewhere?

Historians and sociologists have tried to compare slavery in the USA with slavery elsewhere. Attempts to compare nineteenth-century American slavery with slavery in Ancient Rome are unconvincing: the two societies were so different economically, socially, ideologically and culturally. There is more mileage in comparing American slavery with slavery in places such as Brazil and Cuba in the same period.

It has often been claimed that slavery in Latin America was less severe than slavery in the USA:

- Slaves seem to have had more legal protection in Spanish and Portuguese law, which at least recognised the essential humanity of the slave (unlike American law).
- The Roman Catholic Church may have offered more protection to slaves than Protestant Churches in the USA.
- In Latin America slaves could legally marry.
- **Manumission** was easier in Brazil and Cuba.
- Some historians have claimed that there was less race consciousness in Latin America. The fact that integration between the races was more common may have led to slavery being less harsh. Blacks in Latin America were not necessarily viewed as members of an inferior, servile race.

KEY TERM

Manumission The granting of freedom to slaves.

However, it is now generally accepted that American slaves were better off than their counterparts in Brazil and Cuba:

- They enjoyed better material conditions.
- They lived longer. The natural increase in the USA's slave population was unique. In all other slave societies of the Western hemisphere, the slave population failed to reproduce itself and was sustained only by the injection of new slaves.
- In Latin America the system tended to be one of ruthless exploitation of the slaves to the point of exhaustion, sickness and death, and then the replacement by fresh 'stock'.
- Although slaves in Brazil and Cuba appeared to have had more in the way of legal rights, in reality this meant very little.
- The Catholic Church did little to protect the lot of slaves. It had a worse record than Protestant Churches in terms of condemning slavery as an institution.
- There is plenty of evidence to suggest that racism was as prevalent in Brazil and Cuba as it was in the USA.

How did African Americans adapt to slavery?

Adaptation to slavery

Conditioning

In *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life* (1959), Stanley M. Elkins claimed that the 'closed' system of American slavery had 'noticeable effects upon the slave's very personality'. He argued that, as a result of the repressive system, most American slaves displayed 'Sambo'-like traits: they were 'docile and irresponsible, loyal but lazy, humble but chronically given to lying and stealing … full of infantile silliness'. Elkins went further. He claimed that inmates of Nazi concentration camps displayed similar characteristics. Child-like conformity was the only way that both concentration camp inmates and Southern slaves could hope to survive. Absolute power, in Elkins's opinion, resulted in absolute dependency.

Elkins's thesis brought a critical response. Critics pointed out that the analogy between concentration camps and the peculiar institution was not apt. However bad slavery was, it did not compare with conditions in the Nazi death camps. Plantations were profit-making enterprises, not places of extermination. Nor, from the point of view of the slave, was the American South a totally 'closed' society. There were massive variations from place to place. Many slaves, for example, had little contact with whites. In consequence, they only occasionally had to act out the ritual of deference.

In short, the peculiar institution allowed slaves a wider opportunity for development of personality than Elkins recognised. Elkins came to regret his concentration camp analogy, accepting that 'something less than absolute power produces something less than absolute dependency'. Instead, he argued that a better analogy might have been the effects that prison, boarding school and hospital often have on inmates' characters.

A more trenchant criticism of Elkins has been the claim that most slaves did not display 'Sambo'-like traits. Historian John W. Blassingame thought the typical field hand was 'sullenly disobedient and hostilely submissive'. He suggested that there were at least three stereotype slave characters. While accepting that 'Sambo'-type slaves did exist, Blassingame thought there were rebellious 'Nats' and uncooperative but generally deferential 'Jacks' (perhaps the majority). These traits, in Blassingame's view, did not necessarily reflect the slaves' real personalities. It was simply that side of their personality they presented to whites. 'Ritual deference' to whites was natural enough behaviour when slaves could be punished for showing disrespect.

Slave domains

Historians Eugene D. Genovese and Blassingame both showed that slaves, far from being 'conditioned' by their owners, were active participants in their own development. They had their own 'domains' – or 'space' – free from white interference.

The slave family

Despite the threat of forced sale, most slaves lived in two-parent family groups and slave marriages were surprisingly stable and long-lasting. (Many slave owners made efforts to keep slave families together.) The family, as Blassingame has pointed out, was a 'zone of safety'. By giving slaves love, individual identity and a sense of personal worth, it helped to mitigate some of the severity of slavery. The realities of slavery, moreover, forced the creation of an extended family which helped to protect children, in particular, if and when a family member was sold. Most slave children had aunts, uncles and cousins who might or might not be real kin but who were prepared to assume family roles should a child be orphaned by the workings of the slave trade.

Slave culture

The family, with its extended kinship networks, was one of the most powerful transmitters of slave culture. Slave music – a means of expression,

communication and protest – permeated many aspects of slave life, as did dance. Black folktales also helped to foster a sense of community. The folktales, usually involving animals, often taught survival strategies. Weak animals overcame more powerful and threatening opponents by using wit and guile. (Many of these stories have come down to us as 'Br'er Rabbit' tales.)

Slave religion

Religion, which played an important part in the life of many slaves, may also have been a vital cultural transmitter. Some historians think that the first African slaves brought many of their traditional beliefs, values and rituals with them to America and that these were grafted on to Christianity with the result that slaves evolved their own distinctive style of worship. Black Churches and black ministers were not uncommon by the 1850s.

However, other historians think that slaves, most of whom attended white churches before the Civil War (sitting in segregated pews) simply copied white practices. The style of preaching and active congregational participation that became typical of black Churches was typical of Churches generally in the ante-bellum South. Indeed, it can be claimed that the Church was the most important institution for the Americanisation of the slaves: arguably in no other aspect of black cultural life did the values and practices of whites so deeply penetrate.

The slave community

Working in the fields led to a strong sense of camaraderie, cohesion and community. Members of the slave community were also bound together in helping and protecting one another and a sense of shared grievance.

How much resistance was there to slavery?

Resistance to slavery

Slave revolts

If slave conditions were really so bad, then serious slave revolts ought to have occurred. However, slave revolts were infrequent.

- Gabriel Prosser, a slave in Virginia, plotted outright rebellion in 1800. His plan included seizing Richmond and taking its governor hostage. Informed of Prosser's intentions, Virginian authorities arrested scores of slaves. Prosser and over 30 of his followers were executed.
- In 1811, a slave revolt – the German Coast Uprising – occurred east of the Mississippi River, in what is now the state of Louisiana. The 200 or so rebels destroyed five plantations and killed two white men. The rebellion was quickly put down by local militia forces. Some 95 blacks were killed in the fighting or executed as a result of the revolt.
- Denmark Vesey purchased his freedom in 1800 (after winning a lottery). His plan, discovered in 1822, seems to have been to collect weapons, attack the white population of Charleston, seize ships and make for Santo Domingo (then part of Haiti). Details of the plot were leaked and

35 blacks, including Vesey, were executed. Not all historians are convinced that Vesey did plan a mass insurrection. It may be that the incident had less to do with insurrection than with white hysteria, which fabricated a plot from rumours and the testimony of frightened slaves, desperate to save their own skins by incriminating others.

- The only serious revolt to actually occur was that of Nat Turner in Virginia in 1831. A well-educated and deeply religious slave, Turner managed to win the support of about 70 slaves and killed 55 whites (mainly women and children) before being captured and executed (along with 17 other slaves). Scores of slaves were killed in the process of putting down the rebellion.
- John Brown's attempt to stir up a slave revolt in 1859 failed miserably (see page 97).

There was not even a slave rebellion during the Civil War.

However, the fact that there were no major slave revolts is not proof that slaves were content with their lot. It is simply testimony to most slaves' realism. A great slave revolt was impossible to organise. Whites had far too much power. Slaves were a minority in most Southern states. They were also scattered across a huge area. They were not allowed to own firearms. Nor were they allowed to congregate in large groups. A curfew system was often imposed at night. White patrols policed many districts, ensuring that slaves were securely in their quarters. Slaves suspected of plotting rebellion faced almost certain death. A slave uprising at any time, even during the Civil War, would have been tantamount to mass suicide.

Escape: the underground railroad

Individual slaves found it difficult to escape from slavery and it was virtually impossible for a large family group to make it to freedom. Ninety per cent of runaways were male and 75 per cent were under 35. Most were caught and severely punished.

The so-called 'underground railroad', despite abolitionist propaganda and Southern fears, was far from extensive or well organised. It had nothing to do with railroads or trains: it was simply a system of safe houses from which fugitive slaves made their way as they fled north. Safe houses provided money, food, clothes and advice.

It is difficult to know exactly how many slaves escaped, but it seems unlikely that more than a few hundred slaves a year succeeded in escaping to the North or to Canada. Most escapees came from the upper South: it was far harder to escape from the lower South.

Levi Coffin, a successful white Quaker merchant, is sometimes called 'the President of the Underground Railroad'. For two decades, he and his wife Catharine used their strategic location in southern Indiana to help fugitives to escape.

A few intrepid blacks ventured back into the South to help slaves to escape. The most celebrated was Harriet Tubman. Escaping from slavery in 1849, she returned south on nineteen occasions, helping scores of slaves to escape, including her sister, her nieces and her parents. Despite a huge reward on her head, she was never caught.

Daily resistance

Many slaves resisted slavery on a daily basis:

- Some feigned illness to avoid work.
- Some harmed themselves so they were unable to work.
- Many deliberately worked slowly or inefficiently.
- A few killed their owners.

To what extent was slavery a system of many systems?

Conclusion

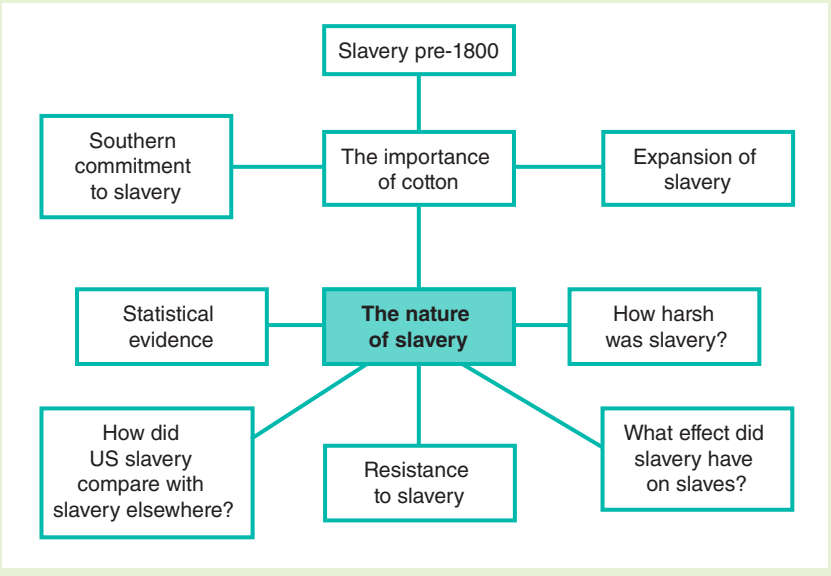
The term slavery covered a multitude of sins in the **ante-bellum** South. In some places it did mean a large plantation and gangs of cotton-picking slaves – the stereotype immortalised in ***Gone with the Wind***. But it also encompassed a host of other experiences. This meant that the life of slaves varied immensely. On big plantations, the slave owner was usually a remote figure as far as most slaves were concerned. By contrast, on small farms, slaves often had a close relationship with their owner – for good and bad. In historian Kenneth Stampp's view, 'The only generalisation that can be made with relative confidence is that some masters were harsh and frugal; others were mild and generous and the rest ran the whole gamut in between.'

As well as differences between slave owners, there was also considerable diversity of work experience. Slaves who laboured in the rice-growing areas of the Deep South probably endured the worst conditions. Household servants generally had an easier life than field hands. Historian Paul Escott suggests that slaves on small farms had a worse lot than those on big plantations, if only because they spent much more time under their owner's supervision and had no sense of belonging to a sizeable slave community. Whether slave women had an easier – or harder – lot than slave men is a subject of some debate. It has been claimed that slave women had a more dominant role than women in white society and were 'mistresses of their cabins'. However, most scholars think that slave society echoed free society and that men usually had the primary role. Domestic chores within slave families were usually done by women on top of their heavy work for their owners.

KEY TERM

Ante-bellum The time before the war.

Gone with the Wind This novel, written by Margaret Mitchell (a Southerner), was published in 1936. It sold over 10 million copies and was made into a successful film. Both book and film suggested that the ante-bellum South was a civilised society.



SUMMARY DIAGRAM

The peculiar institution

3 Key debate

Key question: Was slavery in the USA a system of ruthless exploitation or a paternalistic arrangement?

Over the last two centuries there have been major debates about whether slavery American-style was a system of ruthless exploitation or whether it was a **paternalistic** type of welfare state, offering protection for the slaves from cradle to grave.

KEY TERM

Paternalistic A system akin to that of a family, whereby a father looks after and cares for his children.

The debate

In the early twentieth century Ulrich B. Phillips, a white Southern historian, wrote two influential books on slavery: *American Negro Slavery* (1918) and *Life and Labour in the Old South* (1929). Phillips argued that slavery was as benign and benevolent an institution as slaveholders had always claimed it to be. Most slaves, thought Phillips, were content with their lot. Relationships between slaves and owners were marked by 'gentleness, kind-hearted friendship and mutual loyalty'.

In 1956, Kenneth Stampp, a white Northerner, published *The Peculiar Institution*, in which he put forward a very different interpretation. While accepting that there were massive variations, Stampp held that slavery was harsh rather than benign. He saw little in the way of good relationships between owner and owned. In his view, the typical plantation was an area of persistent conflict between master and slaves.

Stampp's thesis, which has been supported by a host of other historians, remains the prevailing view. However, in 1974 Robert W. Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman produced *Time on the Cross*. After feeding a vast amount of source material into computers, they came up with statistics which, they claimed, displayed precisely what slavery was like. Their conclusions, at least with regard to slave conditions, were similar to those of Phillips. In Fogel and Engerman's view, **planters** were a 'rational' and humane capitalist class and slavery was a mild and efficient system of labour. Slaves, said Fogel and Engerman, were controlled with minimal force and enjoyed a standard of living comparable to that of Northern industrial workers.

KEY TERM

Planters Men who owned plantations with twenty or more slaves.

The response to *Time on the Cross* was overwhelmingly critical. Many historians attacked Fogel and Engerman's techniques and insisted that their conclusions did not possess the 'scientific' status that the authors claimed. Their findings, according to two critics, Richard Sutch and Herbert G. Gutman, were 'confused, circular and so unsubtle as to be naïve. Some of their conclusions can be disproved, while others remain unsupported conjectures, in some cases fanciful speculations.'

The benign view

Those, like Phillips, Fogel and Engerman, who have argued that slavery was benign, have made the following points:

- Slaves did not necessarily work much harder or longer than most mid-nineteenth-century Americans. Most did not work on Sundays, sometimes had half a day to themselves on Saturdays, and received a fair number of holidays. Much of their work was seasonal or dependent on clement weather.
- Floggings were rare, if only because slave owners had a vested interest in the care and maintenance of their property. Just as most Rolls-Royce owners today take good care of their cars, so slave owners looked after their 'property'. (A prime field hand was worth much the same as a modern-day top-of-the-range car.)
- Most owners preferred the carrot as a source of motivation to the stick. Slaves who worked hard were given extra holidays, more clothing and food, and often their own garden plots.
- There was considerable variety in the nature and organisation of slaves' work. By no means all toiled for long hours on cotton plantations. Within slavery there was a hierarchy, tantamount to a career structure. Hard-working slaves had a good chance of promotion. They could pick up a skill or become a slave driver or a plantation overseer.
- Fogel and Engerman claimed that slaves benefited from their work. 'Over the course of his lifetime, the typical slave field hand received about 90 per cent of the income he produced.'
- By using strategies such as feigning illness or working slowly, slaves were able to modify and subvert the system.

TOK

What does it say about the mutable nature of ethics that at the time of the Civil War it was possible to make two diametrically opposed arguments about the institution of slavery? Would this be acceptable in today's ethical universe? (Ethics, History and Perception)

- Slaves were fed, clothed and housed reasonably well (given the standards of the day). Slaves, moreover, enjoyed a large measure of security. On most plantations, they did not have to worry about food, shelter, clothing and illness.
- Historian Eugene D. Genovese, while not defending slave conditions, has argued that most plantation holders had an aristocratic code of honour. Depicting them as more paternalistic than **capitalistic**, he also claimed that they were not particularly racist.
- By the early nineteenth century, there was no need to import African slaves. The slave population increased naturally at much the same rate as white population growth. By 1860, slaves lived almost as long as white Southerners.
- The slave family was the basic unit of social organisation. Slaves usually chose their own partners and married in ceremonies that stopped short of sanction by Church or State. It was not unusual for a slave to be traded so that a couple who were fond of each could live together. Slaveholders refrained from selling small children apart from their mothers.
- Slave suicides were rare.
- Although slaves, in strict legal terms, were regarded as 'chattels' (and thus similar to tables or chairs), they were also viewed as human beings. In most states, they had some legal protection, especially if mistreatment was committed by someone other than their owner.
- The evidence suggests that there was relatively little sexual exploitation. Most white men were restrained in their treatment of slaves by conventional Christian morality, by their own standards of decency and by peer group pressure.
- There was no serious slave revolt (see pages 24–5).

KEY TERM

Capitalistic Concerned essentially with making money.

The harsh view

Most historians remain convinced that slave conditions were harsh:

- Slave owners had unlimited power. Slaves could be sold, punished, sexually exploited and even killed without redress. Most lived, in consequence, in a state of constant insecurity.
- Firm discipline seems to have been the norm. This was an age that believed to spare the rod was to spoil the child – and slave. Floggings, brandings and mutilations were common. The threat of separating a slave from his or her family was an even more effective form of punishment and control.
- It is difficult to establish that most planters were sincerely paternalistic. Most accepted that ultimately they ruled by fear and discipline. Virtually all held racist views.
- Slaves laboured under harsh conditions, commonly toiling from dawn to dusk. The aim of most slave owners was to make a profit – and thus to extract the maximum amount of work for the barest cost.
- Children, sometimes as young as five, were sent to work in the fields.

- Slaves' normal diet, while being sufficient in quantity, was monotonous (corn and pork were the main components) and resulted in many slaves having vitamin deficiencies.
- Most slaves lived in overcrowded cabins.
- Slaves had few prospects of promotion: in most states it was illegal for them to be taught to read and write.
- The slave family unit was far from sacrosanct. A quarter of slave marriages were broken by forced separation. Like other forms of property, slaves were inherited, given as wedding presents, wagered in games of chance and sold to speculators. In the 1850s, some 250,000 slaves were taken westwards. Many went as family units. But thousands of others were separated from their families.
- Planters and their sons took advantage of female slaves. Diarist Mary Boykin Chesnut, a South Carolina plantation mistress, wrote: 'Like the patriarchs of old, our men live all in one house with their wives and concubines.'
- Manumission was rare. By 1860, all the Southern states had laws severely restricting the right of owners to free their slaves.
- The evidence suggests that most slaves hated slavery. Whenever they had the opportunity of freedom during the Civil War, most took it.

Chapter summary

The cotton economy and slavery

In many respects mid-nineteenth-century Americans were a people of plenty and American society was 'a society of equals'. The negative to both these positives was the peculiar institution which reached its prime in the period 1830 to 1860. While US slaves were materially better off than many people in the world, conditions for most were harsh. Slaves had to adapt to the conditions in which they found themselves; perhaps, to an extent, they were conditioned. But they also developed their own culture, the roots of which may have gone back to Africa.

Examination advice

How to answer 'analyse' questions

When answering questions with the command term analyse, you should try to identify the key elements and their relative importance.

Example

Analyse the social impact of slavery in the Southern states.

1 The command term analyse suggests you investigate the social impact of slavery by looking at various components. Another key word on which to focus is social. The question does not ask you about the political or

economic impact of slavery. You might mention these in passing but do not make them the focus of your essay. Also, do not discuss slavery in the North, as the question only asks about the Southern states.

2 Take at least five minutes to write a short outline. This can be done on scrap paper. Focus on what the question is asking. An example of an outline for an answer to this question might be as follows.

- *Social impact for slaves: development of dependency mentality; constant insecurity; broken marriages; rebelliousness among some slaves; poor diets; splits among slaves depending on the type of work he/she did.*
- *Slave culture: growth of distinct types of music, story-telling, religious beliefs, slave foods.*
- *Social impact for freedmen: precarious status; insecurity; quarter-million free blacks in South.*
- *Social impact for whites: fear of slave uprisings; development of culture different from in the North.*
- *Percentages of slaves to whites in the Southern states: roughly one-third slave, two-thirds white.*

3 In your introduction, set out your key points about how slavery impacted the society of the Southern states. An example of a good introductory paragraph for this question is given below.

The institution of slavery impacted most aspects of life in the Southern states. For blacks, both slave and free, and for whites, slavery affected how people lived, worked, ate and married. The legal status of each group and where they fit into Southern society help to explain their relationship with slavery. Furthermore, the South developed a culture increasingly different from that in the North.

4 For each of the key points you outline in your introduction, you should be able to write two to three long paragraphs. Here, you should provide supporting evidence. Be sure to also state the connection between what you have written and the social impact. An example of how one of the key points could be expanded is given below.

An important aspect of slavery's impact on Southern society was the status of the slaves themselves. Because they could be bought and sold at the whim of their owners, it was difficult for them to maintain stable family relationships. Slave marriages were not recognised. Furthermore, female slaves were at the mercy of the owners and suffered additional abuse. After the international slave trade was abolished in 1807, slave owners encouraged 'breeding' as a method of increasing the number of slaves available. Consequently, the slave population grew from 3.2 million to 4 million in a ten-year span (1850–60).

Even within the society of slaves, there were great differences. Slaves who toiled on the cotton plantations in the deep South had the most difficult circumstances because of the hot climate and the constant pressure to pick more and more cotton. Living conditions were also poor and the field hands laboured from dawn to dusk. Slaves who worked as servants fared better. They often had better clothing and food because they were in much closer contact with the owner and his family. There were also blacks who had been freed by their masters or who had managed to purchase their freedom. These free blacks faced uncertainty because they did not enjoy the same rights as whites and had to prove they were indeed free. Nonetheless, they had lives markedly better than slaves.

5 In the final paragraph, you should tie your essay together stating your conclusions. Do not raise any new points here or make reference to race relations in the United States today. An example of a good concluding paragraph is given below.

Slavery's impact on Southern society was enormous. It essentially governed the conduct and lives of all racial groups and how each of these dealt with one another. Even though most whites did not own slaves, they generally remained committed to this form of labour since their social status was based on being higher up on the social scale. For the black slaves, there was little chance of escaping forced labour. Finally, the free blacks, small in number, had better lives than the slaves but were hardly in a secure situation.

6 Now try writing a complete answer to the question following the advice above.



Examination practice

Below are three exam-style questions for you to practise on this topic.

1 Analyse the importance of cotton to the US economy.

2 Explain why slave rebellion was a rare occurrence.
(For guidance on how to answer 'explain' questions, see page 116.)

3 Analyse the major arguments Southern whites made in defence of slavery.

CHAPTER 3

The origins of the Civil War

Prior to 1861, the United States had not been particularly united. For much of the early nineteenth century there were rivalries between the newer Western states and the older, more established Eastern states. Far more important, however, were the differences between North and South, not least the problem of slavery. This chapter will examine North–South differences by considering the following key questions:

- Why were states' rights a problem for US unity?
- What were the main economic and social differences between North and South?
- Was slavery profitable?

1 The problem of states' rights

Key question: *Why were states' rights a problem for US unity?*

The Constitution

How did the US system of government operate?

The 1787 Constitution had created a system whereby power was divided between the **federal government** in Washington and the individual states. The Founding Fathers, accepting that **sovereignty** should be founded on the people, set out to create a system of checks and balances that would prevent any branch of government being in a position to tyrannise the people or any group of people being able to ride roughshod over the rights of others. The federal government had well-defined executive, legislative and judicial branches, each of which was able to check the actions of the others (see diagram on page 34).

KEY TERM

Federal government The national government.

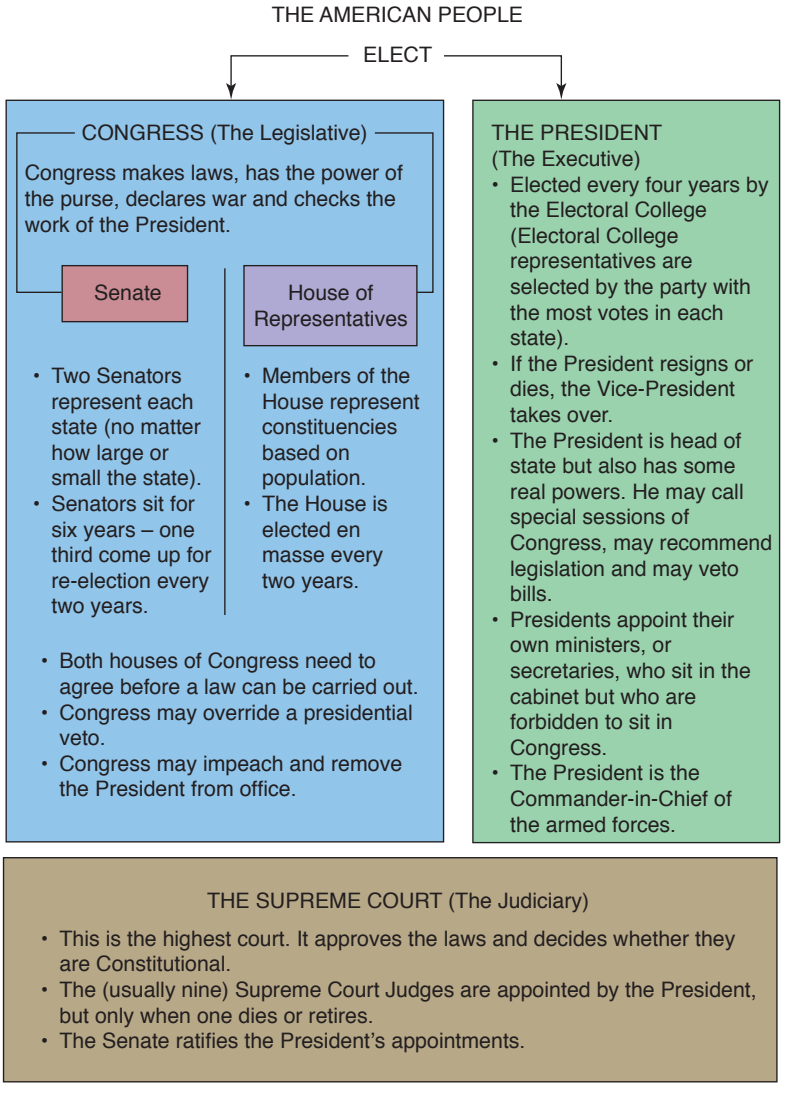
Sovereignty Supreme power.

State governments tended to replicate the federal government: each state had its governor, its legislative body and its Supreme Court. In the late eighteenth century the USA had devised a system for admitting new states. New areas first assumed territorial status, electing a territorial government. Once the population of a territory had reached 60,000 it could submit its proposed constitution to Congress and apply to become a state.

American democracy in action

How democratic was the USA?

By the 1820s, almost all white males had the right to vote. The rise of democracy is often associated with President Andrew Jackson (1829–37), a successful soldier and slaveholding landowner who claimed to represent the common man against the interests of privilege. In truth, Jackson benefited from, rather than created, the democratic tide. While there were limits to that



The Constitution

KEY TERM

Second party system The period from the mid-1830s to the mid-1850s when the Democrats and Whigs were the two main parties.

Platform The publicly declared principles and intentions of a political party.

Tariffs Customs duties on imported goods.

tide – women and most blacks, for example, could not vote – the USA was far more democratic than most of Europe.

President Jackson was very much the catalyst behind the development of the **second party system**. His supporters called themselves Democrats. His opponents eventually were known as Whigs. The two parties were really an assortment of state parties that only came together every four years to nominate a presidential candidate and devise a national **platform**.

Democrats

The Democrats believed that the least form of government was the best. Most issues should be decided at state, not federal, level. Democrats opposed government intervention in economic matters and held the view that the USA would prosper if **tariffs** were lowered and the USA expanded westwards. The

party was strongest in the South and West but could also count on the support of many voters in Northern cities, especially from Irish Catholics.

Whigs

The Whigs were more likely to favour government intervention in economic and social matters, usually advocating higher tariffs and government-sponsored internal improvements (for example, railway building). Northern Whigs often supported 'good' causes such as the abolition of slavery.

Political involvement

Political campaigns generated excitement and high voter turn-outs. In many respects political allegiances were similar to present-day football allegiances. Indeed, politics was the most popular spectator and participant 'sport' of the day: party activities offered excitement, entertainment and camaraderie. The political game was highly competitive: Whigs and Democrats looked forward to defeating the enemy. Political rallies drew large attendances and 'fans' often dressed for the occasion wearing the regalia of their party. Oddly, the main 'stars' – the presidential candidates – rarely participated in campaigns. Instead they retreated to their homes and let their supporters campaign for them.

Presidential campaigns were by no means the only political 'events'. Elections were far more frequent at state and local level. Different states held elections in different months and in different years. In virtually every month of every year, Congressmen or state legislatures were elected somewhere in the USA.

Limited government

Despite fierce inter-party rivalry, government had a limited impact on the lives of most Americans. It was unusual for one party to control the presidency, both houses of Congress and the Supreme Court at the same time. It was thus difficult for the federal government to do very much. The fact that many matters were seen as state and not federal concerns was another limiting factor. So too was the notion, strongly held by the Democrats, that it was not the government's responsibility to intervene much in social and economic matters.

The federal government was made up of only a handful of departments: State, Treasury, Interior, Navy, War and the Post Office. In 1860, there were 36,672 people on the federal government pay roll (excluding the armed forces). Over 30,000 of these were employed by the Post Office. The vast majority of those who worked in the departments were political appointments: so, too, were the **postmasters**. Democrat presidents appointed Democrat civil servants (and postmasters); Whigs did the same. This **patronage** or 'spoils system' was an essential way of promoting party unity. The 'spoils' of office – jobs and government contracts – were what the game of politics was all about for many of those involved in it.

Presidents were more figureheads and distributors of patronage than active policy-makers. Congress, essentially a talking shop, rarely passed major

KEY TERM

Postmaster The person in charge of a local post office, an important position given the process of communication in the mid-nineteenth century.

Patronage The giving of jobs or privileges to supporters.

legislation. Indeed, it was rarely in session, meeting in December and sitting only until March. The actions of state legislatures had more influence on most people's lives than the actions of the federal government. Postmasters apart, Americans rarely came across a federal official.

What were the main states' rights problems pre-1828?

States' rights

The doctrine of states' rights was rooted in fears of centralised power. The Constitution reflected the strength of states' rights feeling:

- Each state was guaranteed equal standing in the Senate – the only provision not allowed to be changed by amendment.
- States' rights supporters regarded the Tenth Amendment as the guarantee of states' rights, claiming that it limited the federal government's powers to those specifically listed in the Constitution. All other powers, they claimed, belonged to the states.

The Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions

The first major confrontation between defenders of states' rights and proponents of centralised power came in response to the **Federalist Party**'s Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798. These acts empowered the president to restrain or expel any 'alien enemy' immigrant from a nation with which the USA was at war and forbade any person from conspiring to oppose the execution of the law or to aid insurrection, riot or unlawful assembly. Thomas Jefferson and James Madison (both future presidents and both from Virginia) declared the acts to be unconstitutional. In the Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions, they asserted that states had the power to protect the liberties of their citizens and thus had the right and duty to judge when the federal government had acted unconstitutionally.

In the event, neither Jefferson nor Madison, nor their supporters, acted on their assertions and in the first decades of the nineteenth century (when Jefferson and Madison were presidents), federalists on the Supreme Court, led by Chief Justice John Marshall, restricted states' rights in a number of decisions.

The Hartford Convention

During the War of 1812 against Britain, New England Federalists, who loathed Southern political domination of Congress, convened the Hartford Convention in 1814. This denounced what the delegates considered the dangerous imperialism of **the Republicans** in Washington and asserted the rights of states to refuse to authorise the conscription and taxation needed to support 'Mr Madison's War'.

The ending of the war in 1815 (and US success at the battle of New Orleans) ensured that the potential crisis did not materialise. Indeed, the affair proved a fatal blow to the Federalist party, which never recovered from the stigma of disloyalty stamped on it by the Hartford Convention's actions.

KEY TERM

Federalist Party In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Federalists and Republicans were the two main parties. The Federalist Party supported the Constitution and federal power.

The Republicans The Republicans (not to be confused with the 1850s' party of the same name) opposed the Federalists. They tended to support states' rights. The first Republican Party, at least in name, effectively disappeared after 1816.

The Nullification Crisis

Why was the Nullification Crisis a threat to the unity of the USA?

The issue of states' rights became a serious concern in the Nullification Crisis.

The problem of tariffs

During the 1820s, tariffs became an important issue. As New England states became increasingly industrial, its spokesmen supported high tariffs to keep out European manufactured goods. Southerners opposed such action. They reasoned that while protective tariffs enriched Northern manufacturers the consequences for themselves were more expensive goods. Southern protests rose to a crescendo when the protectionist 'Tariff of Abominations' (which greatly increased tariffs) was passed by Congress in 1828.

John C. Calhoun and nullification

John C. Calhoun, a powerful politician from South Carolina (and Vice-President of the USA 1825–32), denounced the 'Tariff of Abominations' in the *South Carolina Exposition and Protest*, written anonymously in 1828. Claiming it was 'unconstitutional, unequal and oppressive', he proposed an ingenious constitutional safeguard for Southern rights: the doctrine of nullification. Echoing the Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions, Calhoun argued that a state could, by electing a special convention, nullify any act of the federal government it deemed unconstitutional.

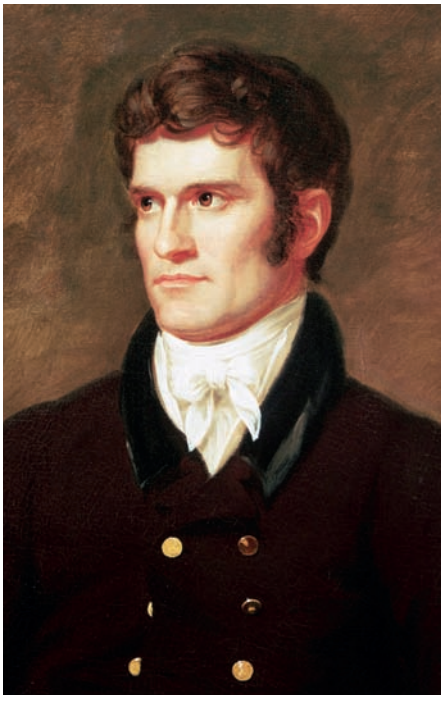
Calhoun said: 'I hold that in the present state of civilisation, the relation now existing in the slave-holding states between the two [races] is, instead of an evil, a good – a positive good.'

South Carolina endorsed the *Exposition* but for the moment did nothing. It looked to the newly elected Jackson administration for redress, expecting Vice-President Calhoun to dominate it.

Jackson versus Calhoun

A series of personal and political quarrels led to a breach between President Jackson and Vice-President Calhoun. The great Senate debate in 1830 on the question of states' rights brought their disagreement into the open. As the Senate's presiding officer Calhoun did not speak but listened with evident approval as his fellow South Carolinian, Robert Y. Hayne, passionately defended the theory of nullification.

Hayne was opposed by Senator Daniel Webster of Massachusetts. Webster asserted that the Constitution was not, as the *Exposition* had it, a compact among states but one between the people. The Union was intended to be perpetual: nullification was treasonable and would lead to civil war. Webster's concluding words were: 'Liberty and Union, now and forever, one and inseparable'. It soon became clear where Jackson stood. At a banquet in April 1830, the President rose and, looking Calhoun straight in the eye, proposed a toast: 'The Federal Union, it must be preserved.'



John C. Calhoun

By 1832, Calhoun and Jackson were political enemies. Calhoun, openly avowing his support of nullification, resigned as vice-president in order to fight for (Southern) states' rights on the floor of the Senate.

Nullification and slavery

Following the passage of a new tariff act in 1832 the nullification controversy came to a head. While the tariff act reduced duties, it did not go far enough to satisfy South Carolina.

The tariff question did not account fully – or even perhaps mainly – for the fear of federal power which now seized South Carolina's dominant planter aristocracy. The rise of militant abolitionism in the North (see pages 53–6) and the shock of the Nat Turner insurrection in Virginia (see page 25) aroused apprehension in a state which had a higher proportion of blacks than any other. Since the North was outstripping the South in population, the day might come when a national majority might threaten the peculiar institution. Thus nullification came to be seen in South Carolina as a means of limiting the federal government's potential power over slavery, as well as preventing Northern economic exploitation.

The crisis

In South Carolina nullifiers won control of the legislature and a popularly elected convention, meeting in November 1832, adopted an ordinance which:

- pronounced the tariff acts of 1828 and 1832 to be unconstitutional and hence null and void
- prohibited the collection of customs duties within the state after 1 February 1833
- warned that South Carolina would secede if the federal government used force against it.

Jackson versus South Carolina

President Jackson, while generally espousing the cause of states' rights, was opposed to any attempt to break up the Union. His response to South Carolina's action was prompt and unequivocal. He sent reinforcements to Charleston and let it be known that in the event of armed resistance he would lead an invasion of South Carolina and hang the nullifiers. In his Nullification Proclamation of December 1832, he asserted that nullification was 'incompatible with the existence of the Union, unauthorised by its spirit, inconsistent with every principle on which it was founded, and destructive of the great object for which it was formed'.

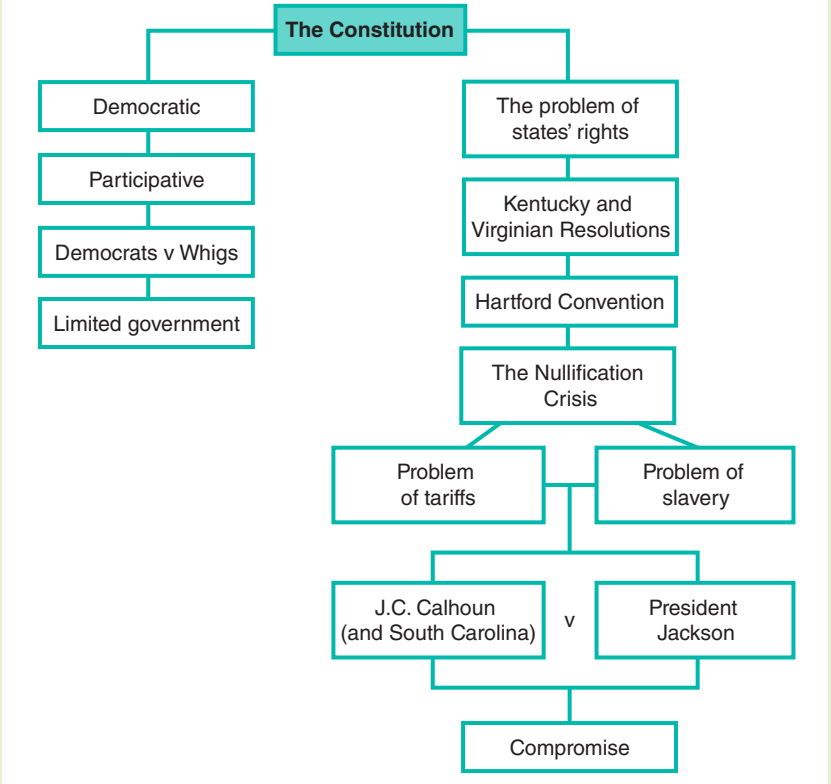
South Carolina responded with counter-threats and began to recruit a volunteer army, as well as seek support from other Southern states. Jackson thereupon asked Congress for a Force Bill empowering him to use the armed forces to collect custom duties in South Carolina.

Compromise

While determined to uphold federal authority, Jackson urged Congress to make further tariff reductions. Meanwhile Calhoun and other South Carolina leaders had become uncomfortably aware of their isolation. While other Southern states opposed protective duties, they supported Jackson. Thus there was substantial Congressional support when Senator Henry Clay, working with Calhoun, came forward with a compromise measure providing for the gradual reduction of all tariffs to a uniform level of 20 per cent. The Force Bill and the Compromise Tariff, simultaneously passed by Congress on 1 March 1833, promptly received presidential approval.

On 15 March, the South Carolina convention accepted the compromise and withdrew its nullification ordinance. Thus the crisis ended with both sides claiming victory:

- Jackson had demonstrated that no state could defy federal authority with impunity.
- The threat of nullification had enabled a single dissident state to change federal policy.



SUMMARY DIAGRAM

The problem of states' rights

2 Sectionalism

Key question: What were the main economic and social differences between North and South?

Some historians have underplayed the differences between North and South, stressing instead the similarities between the two sections: the common language, the shared religion, the same legal, political and racial assumptions, and the celebration of the same history. Other historians, however, believe that there were deep divisions between North and South – divisions that helped to bring about war.

What were the main economic differences between North and South?

Economic differences

There were economic differences between North and South.

Industry

The North was more industrial. The Southern states, with about 35 per cent of the USA's population, produced only 10 per cent of the nation's manufactured output in the 1850s. In 1860, Massachusetts produced more manufactured goods than all the future Confederate states combined. The North had twice as much railway track as the South.

The Southern economy remained dependent on the growing of crops, especially cotton. This, in turn, led to investment in slavery.

	Northern states	Southern states
1800	68%	82%
1860	40%	81%

Percentage of labour force in agriculture

Urbanisation

The North was far more urban. In 1860, the Confederate states had only twenty towns over 5,000 people. Even cities like Charleston and Richmond had populations of under 40,000. Only New Orleans with 175,000 inhabitants was comparable in size to Northern cities. Equally significant was the absence of small towns in the South and the fact that most of the larger towns were on the periphery of the region (usually near the coast). Only one Southerner in ten was a town dweller compared with one in four Northerners.

	Northern states	Southern states
1820	10%	5%
1840	14%	6%
1850	26%	10%

Percentage of population living in towns of 2,500 or more

Immigrants

Unlike the South, the North had a growing number of immigrants. Between 1830 and 1860, most of the 5 million immigrants to the USA settled in the North. (The prospect of competing with slave labour was not attractive to the – mainly – German and Irish immigrants.) Thus, one in six Northerners in 1860 was foreign-born. By contrast only one in 30 Southerners was born outside the USA. Compared to the North, where ethnic diversity was an important influence in virtually every sphere of life, Southerners lived in a world where values and institutions reflected a uniquely American experience.

Southern economic grievances

North and South had different economic interests. The tariff was a source of constant grievance to Southerners, who argued that it benefited Northern industrialists at the expense of Southern farmers. Southern politicians constantly pressed for free trade and complained that their section was being exploited by the North. The South felt exploited in other ways. Southerners:

- depended upon Northern credit to finance the growing of cotton, tobacco, sugar and rice
- relied upon Northerners to market their crops
- relied upon Northern vessels to transport them.

Inevitably much of the profits from King Cotton ended up in **Yankee** pockets.

Southern efforts to diversify

Fearing their section could become little more than a colony of the North, Southern newspapers, journals and commercial conventions stressed the need for the Southern economy to diversify. The message had some effect. Southerners did invest in non-agricultural ventures, especially railroads. In the 1850s, the slave states more than quadrupled their railway mileage. There was also an increase in the South's manufacturing and mining industries. Nevertheless, the South fell even further behind the North industrially in the 1850s as Southerners continued to put the bulk of their spare capital into cotton production. Many were not concerned by the economic situation. Given that cotton and slave prices were rising for much of the 1850s, investment in both seemed sensible.

KEY TERM

Yankees Americans who live in the Northern, as opposed to the Southern, states.

Agrarian Relating to land and farming.

Egalitarian A society in which people are equal.

Modernisation

Was the South backward and the North modern?

Charles Beard and other 'progressive' historians writing in the 1920s claimed that the Civil War was a conflict between a backward, **agrarian**, planter-dominated South and a modern, industrialised, capitalist and **egalitarian** North. This view is now regarded as far too sweeping.

'Norths' and 'Souths'

In reality, there was not one but many 'Souths' encompassing several distinct geographical regions, each with different economic bases and different social structures. Long-established Eastern states such as Virginia were very different from new Western states such as Texas. The lower South was different from the upper South. Even in the lower South, coastal plain areas were different to upland areas. Accordingly, it is difficult to generalise about the 'Old' South.

There were also many 'Norths'. Moreover, in many respects, those 'Norths' were not dissimilar economically to the 'Souths'. The ante-bellum North was industrialising, not industrialised. In 1860, only four Northern manufacturing industries employed over 50,000 people. (The biggest Northern industry was boot and shoe-making.) Nor was the North very urbanised. In 1860, five Northern states had no town over 20,000 people. The North, particularly the North-west, was still overwhelmingly rural.

Southern economic backwardness?

The South was not economically backward. By 1850 cotton sales made up at least half the USA's total exports. Trade in cotton ensured that white Southern society was fluid, prosperous and enterprising. Southerners, with an eye on world cotton markets, had no option but to be entrepreneurial. Moreover, most had an economic interest in a good railway and telegraph network. Nor was the South totally lacking in industry. The Tredegar Iron Works in Richmond, Virginia, ranked fourth among the nation's producers of iron products by 1840.

Was the North more egalitarian?

Slavery apart, the North was not more egalitarian than the South. In 1860 the wealthiest 10 per cent of Northerners owned 68 per cent of the wealth: these figures were almost identical in the South. In 1860, in both North and South, half of the free adult males held under one per cent of real and personal property. Northerners and Southerners lived in a stratified society in which there were great inequalities in status, material conditions and opportunities. The typical Northerner was a self-sufficient farmer, owning 50–500 acres of land. The same was true of the South. In 1860, 75 per cent of Southern families did not own slaves.

Was the South dominated by a reactionary planter class?

Planters, who comprised less than 5 per cent of the white population, owned the South's best farmland and the major portion of its wealth, including most of its slaves. Historian Eugene Genovese believed that the planters led Southern politics and set the tone of social life. Certainly the planters did exert a disproportionate amount of political power and social influence in states such as Virginia and South Carolina. However, in the North a minority of wealthy men wielded similar power. Most of the men who held political office, North and South, were lawyers, merchants, businessmen and large

property owners. (In the South, this inevitably meant that most were slaveholders.) Rich Americans, North and South, found it easier to involve themselves in politics than the poor: they were better educated and could find the time and money to pursue their 'hobby' or 'conviction'.

The notion that the planters were a fixed class is mistaken. As in the North, there was fluidity in Southern society. Men rose and fell. Sons of planters did not automatically become planters themselves or even own slaves, although this was usually their ambition. Many went West to realise it. Everywhere there were opportunities for self-made men to become planters, and then, perhaps, to involve themselves in politics. Of Virginia's eight governors in the two decades before the Civil War, only one had been born a planter. Three had risen from relative obscurity.

Southern states were as democratic as Northern states. Given the wide electorate, planters could not count on political dominance. If planters involved themselves in politics, they had to appeal to large electorates. Nor did they speak with one voice. Some were Whigs and some were Democrats. They were thus not a cohesive class. In fact, it was small rather than great slaveholders who dominated Southern politics. In 1860, slave owners held a majority of seats in all but two Southern states. But planters only held the majority of seats in one state – South Carolina.

Different values

Many Southerners, disliking what they saw in the North, had no wish to industrialise and urbanise. There was a general Southern belief that old agrarian ways and values were better than Yankee materialism. Southerners remained proudly and defiantly rooted in the past. Many held a 'romantic' view of the Southern way of life, seeing themselves as gracious and hospitable. Yankees, by contrast, were seen as ill-mannered, aggressive and hypocritical.

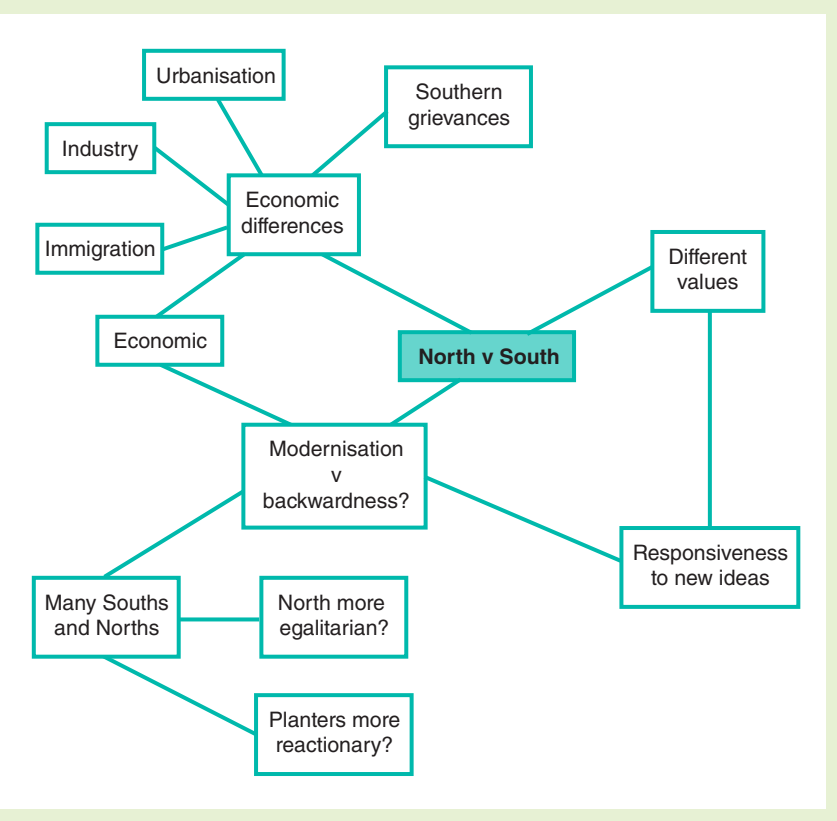
Historian Bertram Wyatt Brown has claimed that Southerners were more concerned about their personal, family and sectional honour than Northerners. In Brown's view, Southern white males demonstrated a sensitivity to personal insult. Dreading public humiliation, they often reacted violently to even trivial incidents, including resorting to duelling.

Other differences between the sections

- Northerners were better educated than Southerners. The South's low population density made it difficult to provide schools for all children and many self-sufficient farmers, who saw little purpose in formal schooling, opposed paying higher taxes to fund education. By 1860, the South had only about half the North's proportion of white children enrolled in schools and the proportion of illiterate whites was three times greater in the South than the North.
- The North was more responsive to new ideas. In the early nineteenth century it was Northerners who espoused movements for reform.

Southerners, in contrast, tended to condemn all radical 'isms', associating them with abolitionism (see Chapter 4) and viewing them as a threat to old values and institutions (especially slavery). Not unnaturally, Northerners saw Southerners as backward and out of touch with 'modern' ideas and ideals.

- The South was more violent than the North. Southern whites were far more likely to carry weapons and to use them. In 1850, there was as much recorded violence in Mississippi as in all the New England states put together and yet Mississippi's population was only a fraction of that of New England.



SUMMARY DIAGRAM

Sectionalism

3 Key debate

Key question: *Was slavery profitable?*

Economists and politicians in the mid-nineteenth century debated whether slavery was economically profitable. Historians have continued the debate. Much depends on defining for whom slavery was profitable:

- Few historians now believe that slavery was profitable for the slave. Fogel and Engerman's claim (see page 28) that slaves kept 90 per cent of the income produced by their labour has been dismissed by most historians.
- Slave owners obviously believed that it was profitable to buy slaves or they would not have done so. Slaveholding enabled planters to increase their cotton acreage and hence their profits. The rising price of slaves also suggests that slaves were a good investment.
- A far more interesting debate is the extent to which slavery affected the economy of the South as a whole.

A damaging impact?

It is possible that slavery was a good business proposition for slaveholders but a poor economic proposition for the South as a whole. This was the view of many ante-bellum Northerners. In 1857 a Southerner, Hinton Rowan Helper, published an influential book, *The Impending Crisis of the South: How to Meet It*, in which he argued that slavery was responsible for the South's economic decline. (The book, dedicated to the non-slaveholding Southern whites, displayed relatively little sympathy for slaves.)

SOURCE A

From H.R. Helper, *The Impending Crisis of the South*, 1857.

Slavery, and nothing but slavery has retarded the progress and prosperity of our portion of the Union; depopulated and impoverished our cities by forcing the more industrious and enterprising natives of the soil to emigrate to the free states; brought our domain under a sparse and inert population by preventing foreign immigration; made us tributary to the North, and reduced us to the humiliating condition of mere provincial subjects in fact, though not in name.

Does Source A prove that slavery had a negative effect on the Southern economy? ?

Since the Civil War a number of historians (for example, Ulrich Phillips) have followed Helper's line and viewed slavery as a burden to the South's economic growth. Arguably:

- Slavery did not fully utilise the potential skills of the labour force.
- Slavery helped to bring manual labour into disrepute among whites, thus helping to undermine the work ethic.
- Slavery did not help the economic well-being of non-slaveholders who suffered from wage levels depressed by slave competition.

- Southern capital would have been better spent on investment in manufacturing and transport.
- Most great planters were not particularly capitalist-inclined: they were more concerned with displaying – rather than making – wealth, a state of affairs that may have retarded Southern economic growth.
- Slavery was incompatible with an urban, industrial society – a fact noted by some ante-bellum Southerners who realised that slaves in cities were much more difficult to supervise. Slavery may thus have imposed a rigidity upon the Southern mind, ensuring that the South opposed industrialisation and remained economically dependent on staple-crop agriculture, especially cotton.
- Cotton prices were subject to the vagaries of international trade. While cotton fetched good prices throughout the 1850s, it may be that the cotton boom was almost over. Competition from other cotton-producing countries was bound to result in falling world prices. If the demand for cotton decreased (as it was to do after the Civil War), the Southern economy would be in tatters.

A positive impact?

A clutch of historians, including Stampp, Fogel and Engerman, have argued (persuasively) that slavery was an efficient form of economic organisation which did not deter Southern economic growth:

- Cotton was profitable. Cotton prices remained high. This led to an increase in the amount of cotton grown and rising slave prices. Southern investors in slaves, therefore, received similar returns to Northerners who invested in industry.
- The fact that the South lagged behind the North in industrial development can be seen as a sign of its economic health. It was making so much money that it had no incentive to industrialise.
- From 1840 to 1860 the increase in per capita income in the South exceeded the rate of increase in the rest of the USA.
- Given that Southern plantations grew cotton more efficiently than any other area in the world, the South faced no immediate threat to its world dominance.
- Historians James Oakes, Fogel and Engerman have contradicted Eugene Genovese's view that slave owners were essentially paternalistic (see page 29). They see them as shrewd businessmen, obsessed with their own personal economic advancement. Such was the pressure to succeed economically that many Southerners, especially the younger sons of planters, left home and moved westwards in search of prosperity.
- Fogel and Engerman have claimed that Southern slave agriculture, as a result of specialisation, careful management and economies of scale, was 35 per cent more efficient than small-scale family farming in the North. This claim is not convincing: it is impossible to make a fair comparison between large-scale plantations producing cotton for export and self-sufficient family farms. Nevertheless, it could be that Southern planters

were more prepared to experiment with scientific agricultural techniques than Northern farmers.

- Slave labour could be used in a variety of tasks and was adaptable to an urban and industrial environment. Slaves, for example, were used successfully in factories such as the Tredegar Iron Works in Richmond and in coal mining.

SOURCE B

The estimated average slave prices for Georgia in selected years between 1828 and 1860. Note that there was very little inflation in these years.

Year	Price ($)
1828	700
1837	1300
1839	1000
1840	700
1844	600
1848	900
1851	1050
1852	1200
1859	1650
1860	1800

Look at Source B. Why do you think the price of slaves tripled from 1844 to 1860? ?

The future of slavery

Some historians have argued that once cotton prices fell, as surely they must, then slavery would have withered away and died of its own accord. If this is correct, the blood-letting of the Civil War was unnecessary.

However, in 1860 there was still a world-wide demand for cotton and thus no valid economic reason for believing slavery was about to die out. James Hammond of South Carolina was coldly realistic when he posed his rhetorical question: '[Were] ever any people, civilised or savage, persuaded by arguments, human or divine, to surrender voluntarily two billion dollars?'

Moreover, slavery was not simply an economic institution. It was also a system of social control. It kept blacks in their place and ensured white supremacy in the South. Even the poorest, non-slaveholding whites felt they had a vested interest in preserving slavery: it kept them off the bottom of the social heap. White Southerners feared that an end to slavery would result in economic collapse, social disintegration and race war. Thus slaveholders and non-slaveholders alike were committed to the peculiar institution: so committed that (ultimately) they were prepared to secede from the Union and wage a terrible war in an effort to maintain it. Given this commitment, it is difficult to see how slavery would have withered away without the Civil War.

Chapter summary

The origins of the Civil War

By the mid-nineteenth century there were significant differences between North and South – differences that were growing as the North's industrial development outstripped that of the South. The North was changing; the South resisted change. Most nineteenth-century European travellers thought they were travelling back in time when they visited the South: it was a different environment from the bustling North.

Northerners were of a similar opinion. Most believed fervently in the dignity of 'free labour', contrasting it with the degradation of the slave South. They tended to see the difference between the sections as a battle between Northern progress and Southern decadence. White Southerners saw things differently. Conscious of their distinct 'Southern-ness', they believed they were preserving traditional American values and tried and tested social and economic customs.

Thus, by 1850, North and South were growing further apart. Northerners and Southerners might speak the same language but (as historian James McPherson has pointed out) they were increasingly using this language to revile each other. Even the shared commitment to Protestantism had become a divisive rather than a unifying factor, with most of the major denominations splitting into hostile Southern and Northern branches over the question of slavery.

The main difference between the sections, and the main reason for the growth of sectionalism, was slavery.

Examination advice

How to answer 'compare and contrast' questions

For compare and contrast questions, you are asked to identify both similarities and differences. Better essays tend to approach the question thematically. It is best not to write half of the essay as a collection of similarities and half as differences. Finally, straight narrative should be avoided.

Example

Compare and contrast the economic development of the North and the South from 1840 to 1860.

1. You are asked to describe economic development in the North and South and **why** the pace of development in the two regions was the same/different. Be sure you understand the term economic development. In this question, you are asked to focus on economic not social or political changes. How did the two sections of the country grow economically?
2. Take five minutes before writing your essay to create a chart to show the similarities and differences between economic development in the North and South. When you write your essay, check off each item. An example of a possible chart for this question is given on the following page.

	North	South
Differences	Much more industry Immigrants went to free states North controlled shipping, marketing, finance of South's agricultural exports Larger population meant more workers	Heavy reliance on cotton Slaves used for labour
Similarities	Railroad construction Economic growth Small farms Elites controlled/directed economic development Many moved to West for economic opportunities	

3 In your introduction start by briefly defining the key term in the question, in this case economic development. You then need to outline the key points you are going to cover and whether you think the North developed at a faster rate than the South. Remember, the question should be focused on economic and not political or social development. An example of a good introductory paragraph for this question is given below.

The first half of the nineteenth century was a period of significant economic development as the economy of the United States grew at a very fast pace. Exports boomed, industries increased, and the labour force expanded. This was true both in the slave states and in the North where free labour was the norm. The South did have a growing network of railroads and telegraph lines and its chief product, cotton, represented more than half of all exports by 1850. The elites in both regions controlled similar amounts of the economy. Nonetheless, there were important differences in the economic development of the two regions. The North did not rely on one key agricultural product such as cotton. Furthermore, it can be argued that the pace of development was much faster in the North than in the South.

4 The bulk of your essay will be discussing the various key points outlined in your introduction. Your argument should focus on both similarities and differences. It is fine if you suggest that the differences far outweighed the

similarities but explain the reasons why this might have been the case. For example, if you believe the industrial development in the North was due to greater immigration numbers and industrial job opportunities, provide evidence. You can also state that the South did develop and possessed important factories such as the Tredegar Iron Works in Virginia. There is no one correct answer for questions such as these. What you need to demonstrate is an understanding that there were both similarities and differences in the economic development in both parts of the country. Furthermore, explain why this was so.

5 Write a concluding paragraph which states your conclusions. Be sure not to include new information here. An example of a good concluding paragraph is given below.

In summation, it is clear that the North's economy developed faster than the South's. The impact of millions of immigrants was profound and many new jobs were created. The North also profited from the South's cotton through control of shipping and capital. Still, the South was not without resources and did expand from 1840–60, albeit at a slower rate.

6 Now try writing a complete answer to the question following the advice above.



Examination practice

Below are three exam-style questions for you to practise on this topic.

1 Evaluate the role westward expansion played in the deepening divisions in the USA during the 1840s and 1850s.
(For guidance on how to answer 'evaluate' questions, see page 79.)

2 Discuss how the Nullification Crisis deepened sectional differences in the USA.
(For this type of question, you should address a range of reasons with appropriate supporting evidence.)

3 Compare and contrast the political platforms of the Republican and Democratic parties in the 1850s.

CHAPTER 4

The abolitionist debate

The American abolitionist crusade was a multi-faceted, long-term reform movement that persisted from the mid-eighteenth century through to the 1860s. The rise of militant abolitionism, coupled with the problems of Western expansion, helped to set Southerners against Northerners in a way that threatened to tear the Union apart. This chapter will focus on the following key questions:

- Why did abolitionism become such a powerful force in the 1830s?
- Why was Western expansion a problem for the USA?
- Why did the Wilmot Proviso cause such a storm?
- How successful was the 1850 Compromise?

1 Militant abolitionism

Key question: Why did abolitionism become such a powerful force in the 1830s?

The abolitionist movement evolved from religious protest and colonisation efforts to political organisation and violent protest. After 1840 abolitionism was to have considerable political effect.

Anti-slavery agitation before 1830

How strong was anti-slavery opinion pre-1830?

Anti-slavery originated as a religious issue. Various Protestant denominations – Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Baptists – all contributed, with Quakers the initial driving force. Eighteenth-century Quakers attacked slavery on the basis of moral principle: namely, the equality of all people before God. Other Americans saw slavery as inconsistent with (American) revolutionary ideology which stressed liberty, equality and democratic political participation. It was also incompatible with notions of free enterprise.

Anti-slavery success in the North

Northern states, starting with Vermont in 1777, gradually abolished slavery. By 1820 it had ended in virtually all the Northern states. In 1787 the Northwest Ordinance kept slavery out of the vast Northwest Territory. In 1808 Congress, following Britain's example, declared the African slave trade illegal.

The Northern attack on slavery, and concern for black Americans, should not be over-emphasised.

- There were relatively few slaves in the North.

- Freeing slaves in most Northern states was a gradual process. Connecticut, for example, still had slaves in 1848.
- Many Northern slave owners sold their slaves to the South, rather than free them.
- Most white Northerners held similar racist prejudices to white Southerners.

Gradualism and colonisation

Abolitionists in the first three decades of the nineteenth century supported gradual emancipation, with financial compensation for slave owners. They also believed that freed slaves should be encouraged to return to Africa. This policy was known as colonisation. The American Colonization Society, established in 1816, supported this aim. The Society had a number of prominent supporters including prominent politicians like James Madison, Henry Clay and Daniel Webster. In 1822 it purchased a small area on the west coast of Africa, as a base for returning ex-slaves. (This area later became known as Liberia.)

However, this policy had little success. Only some 15,000 African Americans had returned to Africa by 1860; in the same period the USA's slave population increased by 2 million. There were never enough funds to free and then transport more than a fraction of the slaves. Moreover, the colonisation movement stirred hostility from a variety of Americans:

- Many Southerners were opposed to manumission.
- Northerners and Southerners disapproved of spending public monies on the project.
- Most African Americans, whether slave or free, regarded themselves as Americans: they were as unsuited to life in Africa as most American whites. African colonisation thus attracted little black support.

The situation by 1830

Before 1830, such scattered anti-slavery groups that existed were found mainly in the upper South. In 1827, the Quaker Benjamin Lundy, who was committed to gradual abolition, counted 106 emancipation societies, with 5,150 members, in the slave states and only 24, with 1,475 members, in the free states. These groups urged Southerners to free their slaves voluntarily. Few Southern whites showed much disposition to defend the peculiar institution. Many seem to have regarded slavery as a necessary evil, believing, like Thomas Jefferson, that they had the wolf by the ears and could not let go.

By the late 1820s, anti-slavery sentiment was strengthening in the North among free blacks and some whites. In 1829 David Walker, a free African American, published *Walker's Appeal … to the Colored Citizens of the World.* The pamphlet, which preached insurrection and violence as the proper response to slavery, circulated widely among blacks and white sympathisers in the North.

Abolitionism in the 1830s

How important was William Lloyd Garrison to the abolitionist movement?

William Lloyd Garrison

The rise of a far more strident abolitionist movement is associated with fervent young Bostonian, William Lloyd Garrison. Convinced that slavery was both a sin and a crime, Garrison rejected the notion of gradual emancipation, colonisation and compensation, and demanded (without any notion of how it should be done) immediate abolition. In January 1831 Garrison launched a new abolitionist journal, *The Liberator*. 'I do not wish to think or speak or write with moderation', declared Garrison. 'I am in earnest – I will not equivocate – I will not excuse – I will not retreat a single inch – AND I WILL BE HEARD!'

Garrison was – and remains – a controversial character. Like many abolitionists, he was involved in other reform movements, including pacifism, temperance and women's rights. His supporters saw him as a dedicated idealist. His critics – and there were many in both the North and South – regarded him as a self-righteous bigot.

For the next four decades, Garrison was to be one of the leading abolitionists. His influence, however, has sometimes been exaggerated. He was just one among many men and women who committed their lives to the abolitionist cause. *The Liberator*'s circulation never exceeded 3,000, 75 per cent of whom were free blacks, many of whom had long held views similar to those which Garrison now propounded. His words, therefore, fell on receptive ears.

The National Anti-Slavery Society

In 1832, a militant New England Anti-Slavery Society was established, followed a year later by the national American Anti-Slavery Society (AAS). This organisation, led by the likes of Garrison, Lewis and Arthur Tappan (from New York) and Theodore Dwight Weld (from Ohio), soon mushroomed: by 1838 it had 250,000 members. It was pledged to the 'immediate abandonment' of slavery 'without expatriation'.

Paid AAS agents fanned out across the North to lecture, distribute tracts and assist free blacks and fugitive slaves wherever possible. Helped by the new steam press, abolitionists churned out a mass of anti-slavery literature. They also organised frequent and massive petitions to Congress. To prevent North–South division, Congress introduced the 'gag rule' in 1836, which ensured that abolitionist petitions were not discussed.

Through the AAS, the anti-slavery leadership combined careful planning, skilful organisation and the zeal of a religious crusade. Among the most effective AAS lecturers were the Grimké sisters, Sarah and Angelina, who came from a prominent South Carolina slaveholding family.

The influence of Theodore Dwight Weld

Theodore Weld was probably the most effective single agent of the AAS. A disciple of the preacher Charles G. Finney (see below), he established a new theological school at Oberlin College in Ohio in 1834. With financial support from the wealthy Tappan brothers, Weld set about spreading the abolitionist message. In 1836, he organised a New York training school for anti-slavery lecturers from which some 70 'apostles' went out in pairs to create a network of abolitionist organisations across the North. Weld's publications included *The Bible Against Slavery* (1837) and *American Slavery as It Is: Testimony of a Thousand Witnesses* (1839). The latter, which included examples of atrocities against slaves, sold 100,000 copies in its first year.

Why did the abolitionist movement win support?

Historians have tried to explain why the abolitionist movement suddenly became so strong in the North in the 1830s. Some stress that it was part of a world-wide phenomenon, in which Britain in particular played an important role. British anti-slavery writings certainly had a receptive audience in the USA. (Britain abolished slavery throughout its colonies in 1833.)

Other historians stress American roots and emphasise the importance of the religious revival in the first three decades of the nineteenth century. Mid-nineteenth century America was a religious society and the Church had a powerful effect on most people's lives. In the early nineteenth century, there was an upsurge in **evangelical** Protestantism known as the Second Great Awakening. Evangelical preachers, like Charles G. Finney, fired up Americans to do battle against the sins of the world – not least slavery.

KEY TERM

Evangelical/Evangelism
A passionate belief in Christianity and a desire to share that belief with others.

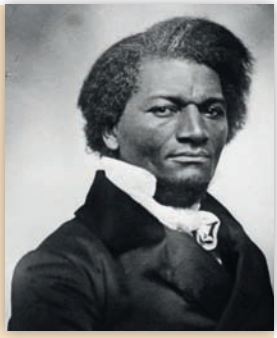
The abolitionists

The abolitionists are difficult to categorise. Some were conservative, others radical. While many were deeply religious, others were prompted more by 'scientific' concern, believing slavery was an inefficient system. If anything, the abolitionist movement was more urban than rural: it was strongest in New England, in New York and in the Ohio Valley. Most of its leaders were well educated and fairly wealthy. Women played a crucial role. So too did free blacks, some of whom, like Frederick Douglass, were ex-slaves.

It was once commonplace for historians to portray the – white – abolitionists as a displaced elite, victims of the industrial revolution who found an outlet for their status anxieties in a crusade against slavery. This view is now seen as far too simplistic. In reality, abolitionists had very different economic, social and cultural backgrounds, very varied personalities, and a host of reasons for devoting (at least part of) their lives to the abolitionist cause.

Historians have often praised the abolitionists' courage and dedicated idealism. But some have been critical, pointing out that many abolitionists were 'holier than thou' rabble-rousers. Many white abolitionists also had a condescending attitude, and sometimes even an antipathy, to blacks. Local

Frederick Douglass, 1818–95



Frederick Douglass became the most famous and influential African American of his time. Born in Maryland to an enslaved woman and her white owner, he spent his youth alternately as a field hand and household servant. Unlike the vast majority of slaves, he was taught to read and write. After the death of his father, he returned to farm labour. In 1838 he fled North, married a free black and worked on the docks in New Bedford, Massachusetts. In 1839 he joined the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society and by 1841 became one of its agents. 'I appear this evening as a thief and robber', Douglass told Northern audiences. 'I stole this head, these limbs, this body from my master and ran off with them.' As well as being an effective speaker, he was also an accomplished writer. His *Narrative* of his life, published in 1845, became a best-seller. Only *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (see page 75) rivalled its impact.

After two years in Britain (1845–7), he returned to the USA and broke with William Lloyd Garrison over the latter's rejection of political means to end slavery. Purchasing his freedom and settling in Rochester, New York, he edited a series of anti-slavery periodicals: *North Star* (1847–51), renamed *Frederick Douglass' Paper* (1851–60) and *Douglass' Monthly* (1859–63). Although a close friend of John Brown, he refused to join Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry (see page 97). After the raid's failure, he fled to Canada and then Britain, returning to the USA in 1860. During the Civil War he helped to recruit African Americans into the Union army. He subsequently held a number of government positions, ending his career as US consul general to Haiti (1889–91).

anti-slavery societies often provided less than full membership rights for blacks and some white abolitionists were opposed to full equality for blacks.

Abolitionist problems in the North

The extent of the abolitionists' success must not be exaggerated.

Northern racism

The movement had only limited appeal in the North where racism remained strong. The perceptive Frenchman Alexis De Tocqueville commented: 'The prejudice of race appears to be stronger in the states that have abolished slavery than in those where it still exists.' Many Northerners, fearing a northern exodus of liberated slaves and fearful of the effect that the new crusade would have in the South, hated the abolitionists. Consequently, they were often attacked, both in print and physically. Anti-slavery meetings (and abolitionist printing presses) were sometimes broken up by angry Northern mobs. In 1837 Elijah Lovejoy became the first abolitionist martyr when he was murdered by a (Northern) mob in Illinois.

Limited political success

The abolitionists had limited political success. Failing to win the support of either the Whig or Democrat Parties, abolitionists set up their own party – the Liberty Party. In 1840 its presidential candidate, James Birney, won only 7,000 votes. Not all abolitionists supported the Liberty Party's creation. Many preferred to work through the existing parties. Garrison tried to ignore the sordid business of politics altogether, refusing to vote under the US Constitution, which he regarded as a pro-slavery document.

Disagreements on strategy

Abolitionists were unable to agree about other strategies:

- Some favoured direct action, hoping to initiate a slave revolt in the South.
- Most, realising that a revolt would be suicidal for the slaves, favoured 'moral' force and hoped to win white support in the South.
- Garrison, a pacifist, was opposed to physical violence: he supported the North breaking with the South in order to avoid all responsibility for slavery.

Schism

The plethora of different opinions, coupled with individual feuds, resulted in a major schism in the Anti-Slavery Society in 1840. New York abolitionists, disliking Garrison's enthusiasm for women's rights both within and outside the AAS, broke away to form the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society. Weld declined to go with either group and drifted away from the movement he had done so much to build.

How did Southerners defend slavery?

The Southern response to abolitionism

The abolitionists' main failure was in the South. Here they had no success whatsoever in winning white support. They were not helped by the fact that in 1831 (the same year as *The Liberator* began), Nat Turner led a slave revolt in which 55 whites were killed (see page 25). The revolt appalled white Southerners who blamed Northern abolitionists for inciting trouble among the slaves.

Anti-slavery in the Upper South had its last stand in 1831–2 when the Virginia state legislature debated a plan of gradual emancipation and colonisation. This was rejected by a vote of 73 to 58. Thereafter, Southern leaders, goaded by abolitionist attacks, developed an elaborate intellectual defence of their peculiar institution.

In 1832, Professor Thomas R. Dew published *Review of the Debate of the Virginia Legislature of 1831 and 1832* – a comprehensive defence of slavery. Arguing that the natural increase in the slave population made colonisation an unfeasible proposition, he went on to justify, and indeed to extol the virtues of, slavery. A clutch of Southern writers followed his example, claiming that slavery was a positive good rather than a necessary evil. History, religion, anthropology and economics were all used to defend slavery. All the great civilisations in the past, it was claimed, had been based on slavery. The Bible seemed to sanction bondage. At no point did Christ actually condemn slavery. Indeed, he seemed to approve it.

Senator James Henry Hammond of South Carolina claimed in 1858 that, 'In all social systems there must be a class to do the menial duties, to perform the drudgery of life.' Many white Southerners shared Hammond's view that African Americans should be the drudges. Blacks were depicted as an inferior species – physically, intellectually and emotionally. Some pro-slavers thought they had been cast out by God. Many claimed slaves were child-like creatures, incapable of taking responsibility for themselves. Slavery was thus

depicted as a matter of social necessity. Most white Southerners believed that freed slaves and whites could not live together without the risk of race war.

George Fitzhugh of Virginia in *Sociology for the South, or, The Failure of Free Society* (1854) claimed that slaves, protected by paternalistic slaveholders, were better off than most working men in Northern factories or freed blacks in Haiti or Africa. Slavery in the USA was portrayed as the most beneficial form of slavery that had ever existed. Abolitionists were depicted as irresponsible revolutionaries bent on destroying the American republic.

SOURCE A

From George Fitzhugh, *Sociology for the South*, or, *The Failure of Free Society* (1854).

There is no rivalry, no competition to get employment among slaves, as among free laborers. Nor is there a war between master and slave. The master's interest prevents his reducing the slave's allowance or wages in infancy or sickness, for he might lose the slave by so doing. His feeling for his slave never permits him to stint him in old age. The slaves are all well fed, well clad, have plenty of fuel, and are happy. They have no dread of the future – no fear of want. A state of dependence is the only condition in which reciprocal affection can exist among human beings – the only situation in which the war of competition ceases, and peace, amity and good will arise.

How might an abolitionist have responded to Fitzhugh's argument in Source A? ?

As well as vigorously defending slavery in print and in words, Southerners took action against abolitionists:

- Anti-slavery literature was excluded from most Southern states. In some states the penalty for circulating 'incendiary' literature among blacks was death.
- From the early 1830s it was dangerous for anyone to express anti-slavery opinions in the South. Some states passed laws limiting the freedom of speech.
- Those suspected of having abolitionist sympathies were driven out, often after being tarred and feathered.
- A number of Southern states put a price on the head of Garrison and other leading abolitionists.

The situation by the 1840s

The white South, slaveholders and non-slaveholders alike, was united in its resistance to abolitionism. The abolitionist crusade, therefore, had little immediate impact on the slaves; indeed, it may have made their position worse, if only because many states placed new restrictions on them.

Nevertheless, if the abolitionists did little in the short term to help the slaves, they did a great deal to heighten sectional animosity. They stirred the consciences of a growing number of Northerners and kept slavery in the forefront of public attention. The gag rule and Southern interference with freedom of speech seemed proof of the growing pernicious influence of the **Slave Power**.

KEY TERM

Slave Power A Northern term for the political influence of the South and the (perceived) dominance of slaveholding planter–politicians in Washington.

? What is the main point Source B is seeking to make?

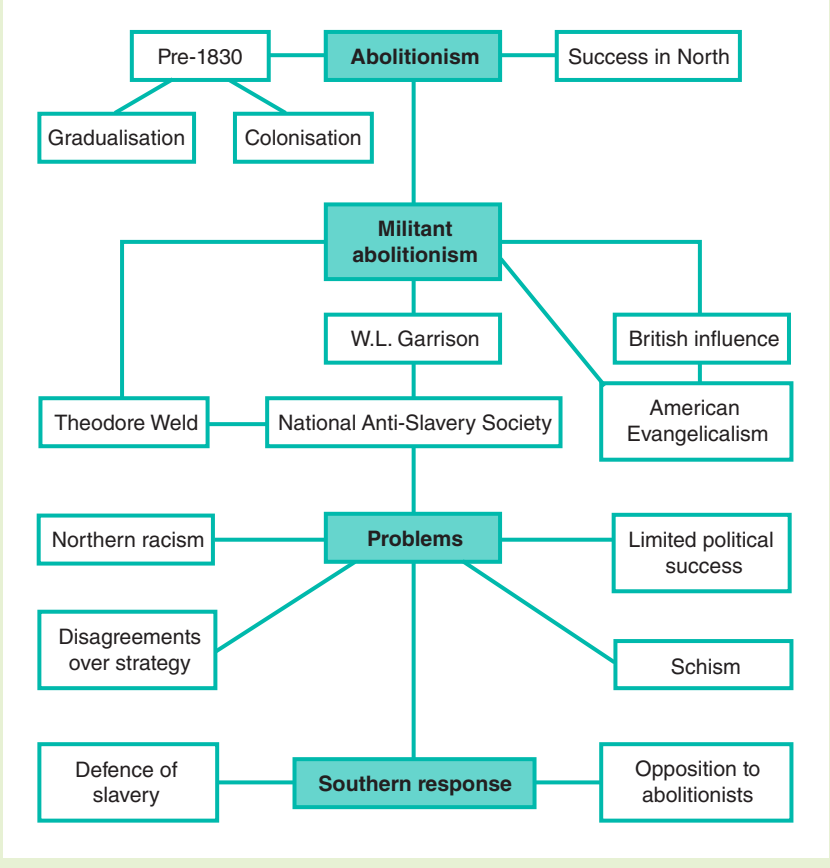
SOURCE B

A cartoon from 1850 defending Southern slavery against Northern critics and visiting reformers from Britain.



Although James G. Birney, the Liberty Party presidential candidate, polled only 7,000 votes in 1840, his candidacy brought national attention to the anti-slavery cause. Running again in 1844, Birney received 62,300 votes (or 2.3 per cent of the popular vote). Southerners, while exaggerating the extent of support for abolitionism, correctly sensed that more and more Northerners were opposed to slavery.

Events in the West ensured that anti-slavery – it was often simply an anti-South attitude – played an important role in national politics.



SUMMARY DIAGRAM

The abolitionist debate

2 Missouri, Texas and Mexico

Key question: *Why was Western expansion a problem for the USA?*

Western expansion had been a problem for the USA from the early nineteenth century. As new states applied to join the Union, there was one crucial question in the minds of most Americans: would the new state be free or slave?

By 1819, the original thirteen states had grown to twenty-two. Eleven states were free; eleven were slave. In 1819, Missouri applied to join the Union as a slave state. Given that this would tilt the balance against them, the free states opposed Missouri's admittance. The result was a series of furious debates, with Southern and Northern Congressmen lined up against each other. In 1820 a compromise was worked out:

- To balance the admittance of Missouri, a new free state of Maine was created.
- Henceforward there should be no slavery in the **Louisiana Purchase Territory**, north of latitude 36°30′ (see map on page 61). South of that line, slavery could exist.

This 'Missouri Compromise' eased tension. Nevertheless the issues raised in 1819–20 alarmed many elder statesmen. 'This momentous question, like a fire bell in the night, awakened and filled me with terror', said Thomas Jefferson.

KEY TERM

Louisiana Purchase Territory The huge area bought from France in 1803.

Why was Texas a problem?

The problem of Texas

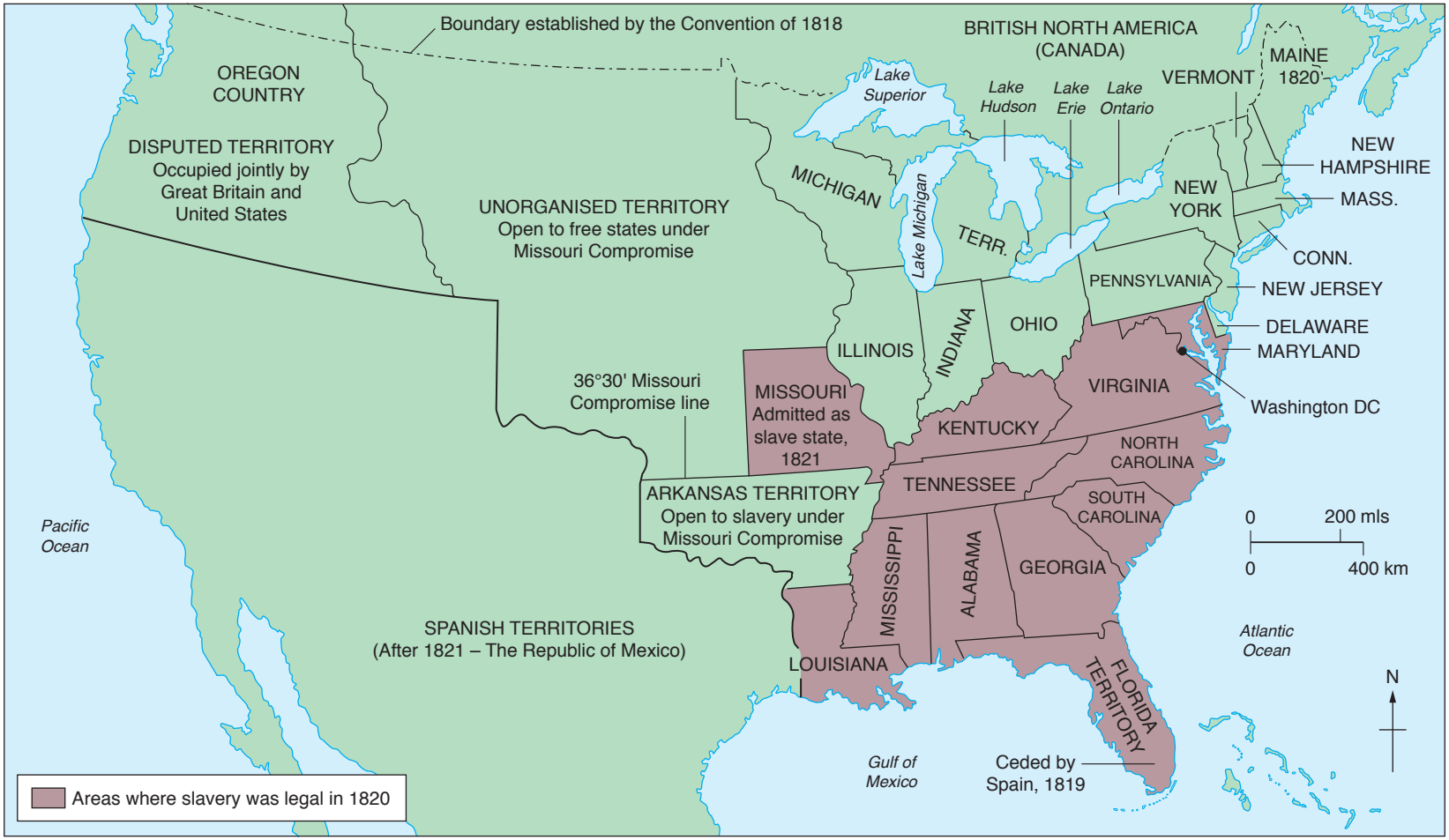
Americans had settled in Texas, then part of Mexico, from the 1820s. Most were Southerners and many had taken their slaves with them. In 1829, Mexico freed its slaves and in 1830 prohibited further American immigration into Texas. American Texans defied both laws and for some years the Mexican government was too weak to enforce its authority. By 1835 there were about 30,000 American immigrants in Texas (plus 5,000 slaves) and only about 5,000 Mexicans.

Texan independence

The efforts of Mexican President, General Santa Anna, to enforce Mexican authority were resented by American Texans and over the winter of 1835–6 they declared independence. Santa Anna marched north with a large army. A force of around 200 Texans put up a spirited defence at the Alamo but this fell in March 1836. Although President Jackson sympathised with the Texans, he sent no official help. However, hundreds of Americans from the South and West rushed to the Texans' aid. In April 1836 an American–Texan army, led by Sam Houston, defeated the Mexicans at the battle of San Jacinto. Santa Anna was captured and forced to recognise Texas's independence.

Texas and the USA

Although the Mexican government did not ratify Santa Anna's action, Texas was now effectively independent. Most Texans, with Southern support, hoped to join the USA. However, many Northerners opposed the move, fearing that it would lead to the spread of slavery. So large was Texas that five new slave states might emerge, tilting the balance between free and slave states heavily in the South's favour. Given that Texas was a political hot potato, Jackson shelved the issue. So did his successor Martin Van Buren. The



The Missouri Compromise

result was that for a few years Texas was an independent republic, unrecognised by Mexico and rejected by the USA.

Texas became a major issue in the 1844 presidential election, fought between the Whig Henry Clay and the Democrat James Polk. Polk, a slaveholder from Tennessee, was elected president on a platform that promised the annexation of both Texas and Oregon – an area claimed by Britain. Outgoing Whig President Tyler, anxious to leave his mark on events, now secured a joint resolution of Congress in favour of Texas's annexation. Thus, Texas was admitted into the Union, as a single state, in 1845.

Why did the Mexican War divide Northerners and Southerners?

Manifest destiny and the Mexican War

President Polk, committed to Western expansion, wished to annex California and New Mexico, provinces over which Mexico exerted little control. Americans were starting to settle in both areas and the Mexican population was small.

Manifest destiny

Many Americans supported expansion. In 1845, Democrat journalist John O'Sullivan declared, '[it is] our **manifest destiny** to overspread and to possess the whole of the continent which Providence has given us for the development of the great experiment of liberty and federated self-government entrusted to us'.

KEY TERM

Manifest destiny The USA's God-given right to take over North America.

Advocates of 'manifest destiny' invoked God and the glory of democratic institutions to sanction expansion. However, many Northern Whigs saw this rhetoric as a smokescreen aimed at concealing the evil intent of expanding slavery.

The outbreak of the Mexican War

The USA's annexation of Texas angered Mexico, which still claimed sovereignty over the state. The fact that there were disputed boundaries between Texas and Mexico was a further problem that the USA now inherited. The barely concealed designs of President Polk on California and New Mexico did not help US–Mexican relations. Efforts to reach some agreement were hindered by the situation in Mexico. Mexican governments came and went with such rapidity that it was difficult for the USA to know with whom to deal.

In 1845, Polk sent US troops into the disputed border area north of the Rio Grande river, hoping to provoke an incident that would result in war – a war which would lead to US annexation of California and New Mexico. In May 1846 Mexican troops duly ambushed a party of US troops in the disputed area, killing or wounding sixteen men. Polk, declaring that Mexicans had 'shed American blood on American soil', asked Congress to declare war. Congress obliged. While most Southerners and Westerners supported the war, many Northerners saw it as a Southern war of aggression.



The Mexican War

The Mexican War

Although the USA had a smaller army, it had twice as many people and a much stronger industrial base than Mexico and thus far greater military potential. Mexican forces were poorly led and equipped. The USA's main advantages were:

- its superior artillery
- its pool of junior officers, most of whom had been well trained at **West Point**
- its enthusiastic (mainly Southern and Western) volunteers
- its naval supremacy.

In the summer of 1846, US cavalry, led by Colonel Kearney, marched unopposed into Santa Fe and proclaimed the annexation of New Mexico. Kearney then set off to California. By the time he arrived the province was largely under US control. American settlers had proclaimed independence from Mexico. They were helped by John C. Frémont (see pages 89–90), in the region on an exploratory expedition, and by a US naval squadron, conveniently stationed off the California coast. Kearney's arrival in California in December ended what little Mexican resistance remained. Polk hoped that Mexico would accept defeat and the loss of New Mexico and California. But Santa Anna, once again in control in Mexico, refused to surrender.

The US war heroes were General Zachary Taylor and General Winfield Scott:

- Taylor won a series of victories over Santa Anna in 1846 and then defeated the Mexicans at the battle of Buena Vista in February 1847.
- Scott, with only 11,000 men, marched 260 miles inland over difficult terrain, storming several fortresses before capturing Mexico City in September 1847.

By the autumn of 1847 the Mexican War was essentially over. It had cost the Americans $100 million and 13,000 dead soldiers (1,700 died in battle; 11,000 died of disease). Mexican losses were approximately 25,000. The USA was now in a position to enforce peace. Some Southerners called for the annexation of all Mexico. However, many Northerners wanted to annex no territory whatsoever.

KEY TERM

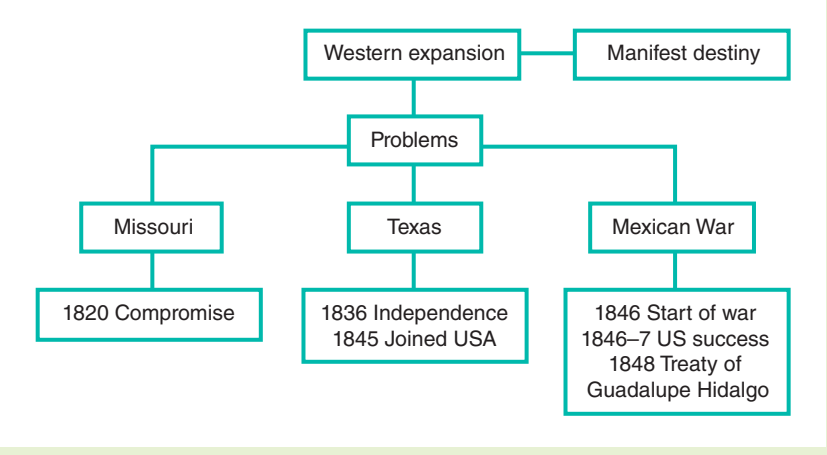
West Point The main US military academy.

The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo

By the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, signed in February 1848, California and New Mexico (including present-day Nevada, Utah, most of Arizona, and parts of Colorado and Wyoming) were ceded to the USA (see map, page 72). In return for this huge area – two-fifths of the USA's present territory – the USA agreed to pay Mexico $15 million.

Polk was unhappy with the treaty. Despite the fact that the USA had gained everything it had gone to war for, he thought even more territory could have been gained. Spurred on by Southerners, who saw the dizzy prospect of dozens of new slave states, Polk considered rejecting the treaty. However,

given Northern opinion and the fact that some Southerners baulked at the notion of ruling Mexico's mixed Spanish and Indian population, he reluctantly accepted the agreement, which was ratified by the Senate in 1848.



SUMMARY DIAGRAM

Missouri, Texas and Mexico

3 The impact of the Mexican War 1846–50

Key question: Why did the Wilmot Proviso cause such a storm?

The key issue was whether the states created from Mexican land would become slave or free.

The Wilmot Proviso

Why did Wilmot introduce his proviso?

In August 1846, David Wilmot, a Democrat from Pennsylvania, proposed that slavery should be excluded from any territory gained from Mexico.

Wilmot's aims

Wilmot was not an abolitionist. Like many Northern Democrats, he resented the fact that Polk seemed to be pursuing a pro-Southern policy. While happy to fight the Mexican War, Polk had reneged on his promise to take the whole of Oregon. Instead an agreement had been reached whereby Britain took the area north of the 49th parallel; the USA took southern Oregon. This made sense: the USA did well out of the deal and it would have been foolish to have fought both Mexico and Britain. But Northern Democrats, like Wilmot, felt that Polk's appeasement of Britain, coupled with his forceful action against Mexico, symbolised his pro-Southern bias.

KEY TERM

Proviso A provision or condition, added to a proposed bill.

Territories Areas that had not yet become states and which were still under federal government control.

In supporting the **Proviso**, Northern Democrats hoped to keep blacks out of the new territories and ensure that white settlers would not face competition from slave planters. Concerned at the coming mid-term elections, Northern Democrats were also warning Polk of their unease with the direction of his policies.

The Southern response

After a bitter debate, the Proviso passed the House of Representatives by 83 votes to 64. The voting was sectional: every Southern Democrat and all but two Southern Whigs voted against it. Most Northerners voted for it. Senator Toombs of Georgia warned that if the Proviso became law, he would favour disunion rather than 'degradation'. Failing to pass the Senate, the Proviso did not become law. Nevertheless, for anti-slavery forces, the Proviso became a rallying cry. Many Northern state legislatures endorsed it. Most Southern states denounced it.

The Calhoun Doctrine

Northerners believed that Congress had the power to exclude slavery from the **territories** and should exercise that power. Southerners challenged the doctrine of Congressional authority to regulate or prohibit slavery in the territories. John C. Calhoun (see page 37) played a crucial role. In 1847, he issued a series of resolutions in which he claimed that citizens from every state had the right to take their 'property' to any territory. Congress, he asserted, had no authority to place restrictions on slavery in the territories. If the Northern majority continued to ride roughshod over the rights of the Southern minority, Southern states would have little option but to secede.

The search for compromise

The problem of slavery expansion preoccupied Congress, which met in December 1847, to the exclusion of every other issue. Moderate politicians, aware that the issue could destroy the Union, sought a compromise. The preferred solution of some, including Polk, was to continue the 36°30′ line across the continent. Slavery would be banned in any territory gained from Mexico north of this line but would be allowed south of the line. This proposal, opposed by most Northerners, failed to win enough support to pass through Congress.

Popular sovereignty

A more successful compromise idea was popular sovereignty – the view that settlers, not Congress, should decide whether a territory should or should not allow slaves. This was associated with two Mid-western Democratic Senators: Lewis Cass and Stephen Douglas. Consistent with democracy and self-government, popular sovereignty seemed to offer something to both sections. It met the South's wish for federal non-intervention and held out the prospect that slavery might be extended to some of the Mexican territories. It could also be presented to the North as an exclusion scheme

because it was unlikely that settlers in the new territories would vote for the introduction of slavery.

However, there were problems with the concept of popular sovereignty:

- It went against previous practice. In the past, Congress had decided on what should happen in the territories. Did popular sovereignty mean that it no longer had that power?
- There were practical difficulties. The main problem was when exactly a territory should decide on the slavery question. Northern Democrats envisaged the decision being made early – as soon as the first territorial assembly met. Southern Democrats, keen to ensure that slaves were allowed into territories, saw the decision being made late, near the end of the territorial phase when settlers were seeking admission to the Union. In the interim, they envisaged that slavery would be recognised and protected.

Despite this ambiguity, popular sovereignty was supported by most Democrats. It was opposed by a few Southerners who thought they had the right to take their 'property' anywhere they wanted, and by Northerners who believed that slavery should not be allowed to expand under any circumstances, not even if most settlers wished it to expand.

The 1848 election

What were the main results of the 1848 election?

Although Polk had presided over an administration that had won the greatest area of territory in US history, he gained little credit for the Mexican War. Worn out by constant opposition, he decided not to seek a second term. The Democrats rallied round the concept of popular sovereignty and nominated Lewis Cass as presidential candidate.

The Whigs nominated Mexican war hero Zachary Taylor. Taylor had no previous political experience. The fact that he was a Louisiana slave owner did not endear him to abolitionists. Nevertheless, many Northern Whigs were prepared to endorse Taylor if only because he seemed a likely winner. To avoid a split between its Northern and Southern wings, the Whigs had no national platform on slavery expansion. This meant that they could conduct a two-faced campaign, running as an anti-slavery party in the North and as a pro-Southern rights party in the South.

The Free Soil Party

A new party, the Free Soil Party, was formed to fight the election. It included:

- Northern Democrats who were alarmed at the Southern dominance of the Democrat Party.
- 'Conscience' Whigs (who had no intention of campaigning for a Southern slave owner).
- Liberty Party supporters.

The party supported the Wilmot Proviso, espoused the slogan 'free soil, free speech, free labor and free men', and nominated Martin Van Buren, a former Democrat president (1837–41), as its presidential candidate.

The election result

Taylor won 1,360,000 votes (47.5 per cent of the total) and 163 electoral college votes. Cass won 1,220,000 votes (42.5 per cent) and 127 electoral college votes. Van Buren won 291,000 votes (10 per cent) but no electoral college votes. Taylor's victory was not sectional. He carried eight of the fifteen slave states and seven of the fifteen free states. Even so, sectional issues influenced the result. Throughout the election, the expansion of slavery had been the crucial issue. The fact that the Free Soil Party won 10 per cent of the popular vote was some indication of Northern opinion.

Congressional tension

Congress, which met in December 1848, was dominated by debates over slavery. Northern representatives reaffirmed the Wilmot Proviso and condemned slave trading in Washington DC. Calhoun now issued his *Address to the People of the Southern States*. The *Address*, a defence of slavery and an attack on Northern aggression, was an effort to unite all Southern Congressmen behind the 'Southern cause'. Calhoun's tactic, however, failed. At this stage, most Southern Whigs placed their trust in Taylor. Only 48 members of Congress, about one-third of slave state members, signed the *Address*.

California and New Mexico

Few Americans had thought that California or New Mexico would speedily apply for statehood. But the discovery of gold in California touched off the 1848–9 Gold Rush. Within months, there were 100,000 people in California, more than enough to enable the area to apply for statehood. New Mexico had fewer people. However, thousands of **Mormons** had settled around Salt Lake City in 1846–7. Now, as a result of the Mexican War, they found themselves under US jurisdiction.

KEY TERM

Mormons Members of a religious sect, founded in the 1820s by Joseph Smith.

President Taylor

Zachary Taylor was judged by most contemporaries (and by many historians since) as a political amateur who was prone to over-simplifying complex problems. Although a Southerner (and owner of over 100 slaves), he was determined to act in a way that, he hoped, benefited the national interest. Shunning the advice of Kentucky Senator Henry Clay, Taylor was far more influenced by New York Senator William Seward. Few Southern Whigs were happy with Seward's prominence.

Taylor's actions in 1849

Congress's sitting ended in March 1849. It would not meet again until December. Taylor determined to act decisively. Hoping that a quick solution to the California–New Mexico problem might reduce the potential for

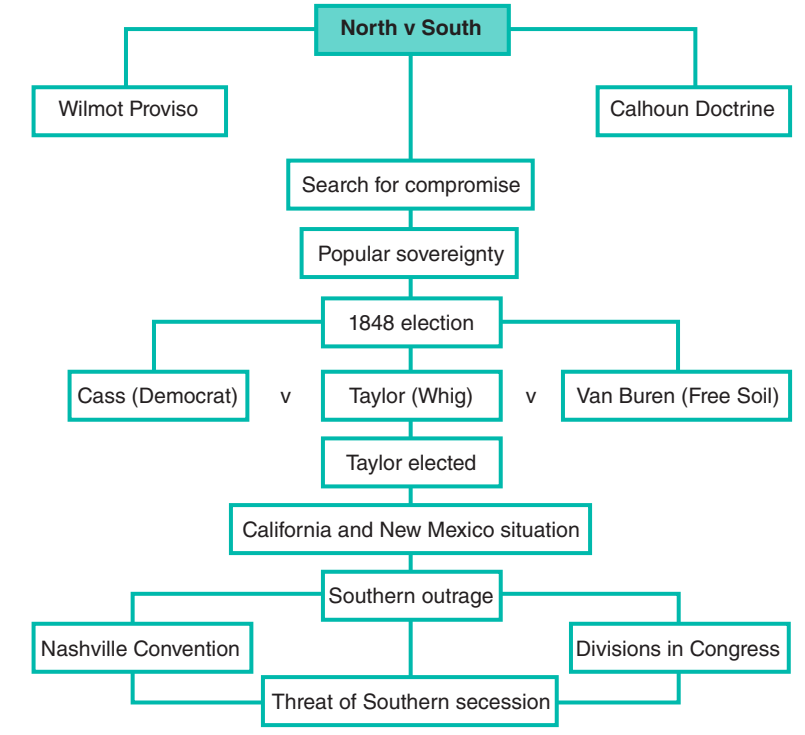
sectional strife, he encouraged settlers in both areas to frame constitutions and apply immediately for admission to the Union without first going through the process of establishing territorial governments. He was sure that people in both states would vote for free state constitutions. Taylor, who had no wish to see slavery abolished, believed that it would be best protected if Southerners refrained from rekindling the slavery issue in the territories.

In 1849, California duly ratified a constitution prohibiting slavery and applied for admission to the Union. Taylor was also prepared to admit New Mexico, even though it had not enough people to apply for statehood. There was a further problem with New Mexico: it had a major boundary dispute with Texas. Southerners supported Texas's claim; Northerners – and Taylor – supported New Mexico. A clash between the state forces of Texas and the US army suddenly seemed imminent.

Southern resentment

Having done much of the fighting against Mexico, Southerners – Democrats and Whigs alike – were incensed that they were now being excluded from the territory gained. Many appreciated that the climate and terrain of the area made it inhospitable to slavery: there was no rush to take slaves into New Mexico or California. Nevertheless, Southerners believed that neither territory should be admitted to the Union as free states without compensation to the South. Some Southerners went further. In October 1849, Mississippi issued a call to all slave states to send representatives to a convention to meet at Nashville in June 1850 to devise and adopt 'some mode of resistance to Northern aggression' (see page 73).

Taylor's hopes of resolving the sectional strife were dashed. Bitter divisions were reflected in Congress, which met in December 1849. Fist fights between Congressmen were commonplace. Debates over slavery expansion were equally fierce. Southerners also raised the issues of fugitive slaves, claiming (rightly) that many Northern states were flouting the (1793) Fugitive Slave Law and frustrating slaveholders' efforts to catch runaways and return them to the South. Northerners objected to the fact that slavery was still allowed in Washington. The dispute between Texas and New Mexico added to the tension as more Southerners began to talk of secession.



SUMMARY DIAGRAM

The impact of the Mexican War 1846–50

4 The 1850 Compromise

Key question: How successful was the 1850 Compromise?

Taylor was prepared to call (what he saw as) the Southern bluff and, if need be, to lead an army into the South to prevent secession. However, many politicians from Mid-western states were worried by events and felt that the South had to be placated. Their leader was 73-year-old Henry Clay, the Kentuckian senator who had helped to resolve the Missouri Crisis (see page 60) and the Nullification Crisis (see pages 37–9).

Why did Clay's proposals generate so much debate?

Clay's proposals

In January 1850, Clay offered the Senate a set of resolutions as a basis for a compromise:

- California was to be admitted as a free state.
- Utah (formerly the Mormon 'state' of Deseret) and New Mexico were to be organised as territories without any mention of, or restriction on, slavery.

- Slave-trading but not slavery itself should end in Washington DC.
- A more stringent Fugitive Slave Act (see pages 74–5) should be passed to placate the South.
- Texas should surrender the disputed land to New Mexico. In return, Congress would assume the $10 million public debt that Texas still owed.

The Compromise debate

The next few months were marked by a series of epic speeches as Clay's proposals, rolled into a single 'omnibus' bill, were debated in Congress. Most of the 'old guard' politicians (for example, Clay, Calhoun and Webster), many making their last major appearance on the public stage, contributed to the debates. So, too, did a number of men (for example, William Seward and Stephen Douglas) who were just beginning what were to be prestigious political careers.

Clay defended his proposals in a four-hour speech in February 1850. He declared:

> *I have seen many periods of great anxiety, of peril, and of danger in this country and I have never before risen to address any assemblage so oppressed, so appalled, and so anxious.*

Warning the South against secession, he assured the North that nature would check the spread of slavery more effectively than a thousand Wilmot Provisos.

Calhoun would have spoken but he was seriously ill. His speech was thus read by Senator Mason of Virginia on 4 March. (Within a month of the speech Calhoun was dead.) Calhoun declared that the North was responsible for the crisis: Northerners threatened slavery. If the threats continued, Southern states would have no option but to leave the Union.

SOURCE C

Part of Calhoun's speech to the Senate, March 1850.

How can the Union be saved? [...] There is but one way by which it can be, and that is by adopting such measures as will satisfy the States belonging to the Southern section, that they can remain in the Union consistently with their honour and their safety. [...] But can this be done? Yes, easily; not by the weaker party, for it can of itself do nothing – not even protect itself – but by the stronger. The North has only to will it to accomplish it – to do justice by conceding to the South an equal right in the acquired territory, and to do her duty by causing the stipulations relative to fugitive slaves to be faithfully fulfilled – to cease the agitation of the slave question.

How might a Northerner have responded to Calhoun's argument in Source C? ?

On 7 March, 69-year-old Daniel Webster, a leading Northern Whig, spoke in support of the Compromise. 'I wish to speak today', he declared, 'not as a Massachusetts man, not as a Northern man, but as an American.' While



The USA in the 1850s

moderates praised his speech, abolitionists denounced him for betraying the cause of freedom.

The conciliatory voices of Clay and Webster made few converts. With every call for compromise, some Northern or Southern speaker would rise and inflame passions.

Moreover, Taylor made it clear that he opposed Clay's proposals. In his view, California should be admitted as a free state immediately while New Mexico should come in with all possible speed. Southerners would have to accept their medicine.

The Nashville convention

In June 1850, delegates from nine slave states met at Nashville. The fact that six slave states did not send delegates was disconcerting to 'fire-eaters'. Even more worrying was the fact that the convention displayed little enthusiasm for secession. Southern Whigs were still hopeful that some compromise could be arranged. The Nashville convention, therefore, had little impact.

The death of Taylor

In July, President Taylor died of gastroenteritis. (Webster was not alone in believing there would have been a civil war if Taylor had lived.) Vice-President Millard Fillmore now became President. Although a Northerner, Fillmore was sympathetic to the South. His break with Taylor's policies was immediately apparent. There were wholesale cabinet changes (Webster, for example, became Secretary of State) and Fillmore threw his weight behind the Compromise proposals. Nevertheless, on 31 July Clay's bill was defeated, mainly because most Northern Congressmen, anxious to escape the charge of bargaining with the South, voted against it.

The Compromise agreed

Why did Congress accept the Compromise?

Senator Stephan Douglas now demonstrated his political skill. Known as the 'Little Giant' (he was under 5 feet 4 inches tall), Douglas replaced Clay as leader of the Compromise cause.

Douglas's action

Stripping Clay's bill down to its component parts, Douglas submitted each part as a separate bill. This strategy was successful. Southerners voted for those proposals they liked; Northerners did likewise. A few moderates, like Douglas himself, swung the balance. By September 1850, all the bits of the Compromise had passed:

- statehood for California
- territorial status for Utah and New Mexico, allowing popular sovereignty
- abolition of the slave trade in Washington
- a new Fugitive Slave Act
- resolution of the Texas–New Mexico boundary dispute.

Political leaders hailed the Compromise as a settlement of the issues that threatened to divide the nation.

A compromise?

Historian David Potter questioned whether the Compromise was a compromise. He thought it was more an armistice. Most Northern Congressmen had voted against the pro-slavery measures while most Southern Congressmen had voted against the anti-slavery measures. The Compromise had skirted, rather than settled, the controversy over slavery in the territories.

Many Northerners believed that Congress had cravenly surrendered to Southern threats. However, the North gained more than the South from the Compromise. The entry of California into the Union tilted the balance in favour of the free states. The resolutions on New Mexico and Utah were hollow victories for the South. The odds were that these areas would one day enter the Union as free states. The Fugitive Slave Act was the North's only major concession.

The end of the crisis

Most Americans seemed prepared to accept the Compromise. Across the USA, there were mass meetings to celebrate its passage. Southern secessionists' hopes foundered:

- Only half the Nashville convention delegates turned up when it met again in November.
- In Southern state elections in 1851–2, Unionist candidates defeated secessionists.

The South had decided against secession – for now. But ominously for the future, many Southerners had come to accept Calhoun's doctrine that secession was a valid constitutional remedy, applicable in appropriate circumstances. The hope was that those circumstances would not arise.

How serious was sectional strife in the years 1850–3?

North–South problems 1850–3

In December 1851, President Fillmore announced that the Compromise was 'final and irrevocable'. Douglas resolved 'never to make another speech on the slavery question … Let us cease agitating, stop the debate and drop the subject.' While the remainder of Fillmore's administration was relatively tranquil, sectional problems remained.

The Fugitive Slave Act

The Fugitive Slave Act contained a number of features that were distasteful to moderates and outrageous to abolitionists. For example, it authorised federal marshals to raise **posses** to pursue fugitives on Northern soil. Those who refused to join risked a $1,000 fine. In addition, the law targeted not only recent runaways but also those who had fled the South decades earlier.

KEY TERM

Posse A group of men called out by a sheriff or marshal to aid in enforcing the law.

Efforts to return fugitive slaves inflamed feelings. In 1854, a Boston mob broke into a courthouse and killed a guard in an abortive effort to rescue the fugitive slave Anthony Burns. Troops had to escort Burns to Boston harbour where a ship carried him back to slavery. The Burns affair was one of a number of well-publicised incidents. Burns was later ransomed for $1,300 and attended Oberlin College in Ohio.

The fact that some free states went to great lengths to negate the Fugitive Slave Act caused huge resentment in the South. However, overt resistance to the Act was exaggerated by both Southerners and abolitionists. In most Northern states the law was enforced without much trouble. Between 1850 and 1856 only three fugitives were forcibly rescued from the slave-catchers. In the same period some 200 fugitives were returned to the South.

Uncle Tom's Cabin

In 1851, Harriet Beecher Stowe began publishing *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in weekly instalments in an anti-slavery newspaper. The story, which presented a fierce attack on slavery, relates the trials of Uncle Tom, a middle-aged and religious Kentucky slave who is sold to a new owner, Augustine St Clair. After the latter's death, he becomes the property of Simon Legree, a cruel plantation overseer, who eventually flogs Uncle Tom to death because the slave refused to reveal the whereabouts of two fugitives. Reprinted in book form in 1852, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was an instant success, selling 300,000 copies in the USA in its first year and a further 2 million copies in America over the next ten years. Even those Northerners who did not read it were familiar with its theme because it was also turned into songs and plays.

Stowe asserted that the 'separate incidents that compose the narrative are, to a very great extent, authentic, occurring, many of them, either under her own observation or that of her personal friends'. In reality, she had little first-hand knowledge of slavery: she relied upon her imagination and on abolitionist literature when describing its brutalities. The pious daughter, wife, sister and mother of ministers, Stowe could hardly help preaching herself. She declared that she had 'given only a faint shadow, a dim picture, of the anguish and despair that are, at this very moment … shattering thousands of families … Nothing of tragedy can be written, can be spoken, can be conceived, that equals the frightful reality of scenes daily and hourly acting on our shores, beneath the shadow of American law, and the shadow of the cross of Christ.'

Although it is impossible to gauge its precise impact, the book undoubtedly aroused wide sympathy for slaves and probably pushed some Northerners toward a more aggressively anti-slavery stance. In historian David Potter's view, Northerners' attitude to slavery was 'never quite the same after *Uncle Tom's Cabin*'. Arch-abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, after reading the book, wrote to Stowe: 'I estimate the value of anti-slavery writing by the

abuse it brings. Now all the defenders of slavery have let me alone and are abusing you.'

The 1852 election

The Democrats were confident of victory in 1852. Many Irish and German immigrants were now entitled to vote and were expected to vote Democrat. Moreover, Van Buren and his supporters, who had formed the core of the Free Soil Party (see pages 68–9), had now returned to the Democrat fold. The Democrats chose Franklin Pierce of New Hampshire as their presidential candidate. Handsome, charming but somewhat lightweight, Pierce's main asset was that he was acceptable to all factions of the party. 'We Polked 'em in '44', boasted the Democrat press: 'we'll Pierce 'em in '52.' The Democrats campaigned on a platform supporting the 1850 Compromise and popular sovereignty, and resisting 'agitation of the slavery question under whatever shape or colour the attempt may be made'.

The Whigs were divided North against South, in terms of agreeing to a platform and choosing a candidate. While most Northerners supported Mexican War hero General Winfield Scott (a Southerner), most Southern Whigs hoped to retain Fillmore (a Northerner). Scott was finally nominated on the 53rd ballot. In many ways he was a good choice. Although politically inexperienced, he was a man of integrity and ability and the Whigs had twice won elections by nominating military heroes. Although the Whigs managed to agree on a leader, they could not agree on policies. Accordingly their platform said virtually nothing.

Pierce won the election with 1,601,274 votes (51 per cent of the total). He carried 27 states (254 electoral college votes). Scott won 1,386,580 votes (44 per cent) but carried only four states (42 electoral votes). John Hale, the Free Soil Party candidate, won 156,000 votes (5 per cent), carrying not a single state. Many Whigs were stunned by the defeat. Whig Senator Alexander Stephens from Georgia moaned that 'the Whig party is dead'.

President Pierce

Pierce was inaugurated president in March 1853. Although he was soon to prove weak and irresolute, he seemed to be in a strong position. The Democrats had large majorities in both Houses of Congress and the economy continued to boom. The Whig party, seriously divided, was unable to mount much of a challenge and two of its best-known leaders, Webster and Clay, died in 1852.

Pierce intended to maintain the unity of his party by championing expansionist policies. Southerners had good reason for hoping that the USA would expand into Central America and/or Cuba, thus allowing the opportunity for slavery also to expand.

The Gadsden Purchase

In 1853, Pierce gave James Gadsden the authority to negotiate the purchase of 250,000 square miles of Mexican territory. Gadsden eventually agreed to purchase 54,000 square miles. Southerners supported the acquisition of this territory, not because of its slavery potential, but because it would assist the building of a Southern railway to the Pacific.

Cuba

Pierce encountered serious opposition when he tried to acquire Cuba, the last remnant of Spain's American empire. In 1851, an American-sponsored '**filibuster**' expedition to try to overthrow the Spanish Cuban government had failed miserably. In 1853–4, Mississippi's former senator John Quitman planned an even greater expedition. Several thousand American volunteers were recruited and contact was made with Cuban rebels. In July 1853 Pierce met Quitman and, unofficially, encouraged him to go ahead with his plans. Pierce's main problem was Northern opinion: Northerners viewed filibustering as another example of Southern efforts to expand slavery. Alarmed by Northern reaction, Pierce forced Quitman to scuttle his expedition.

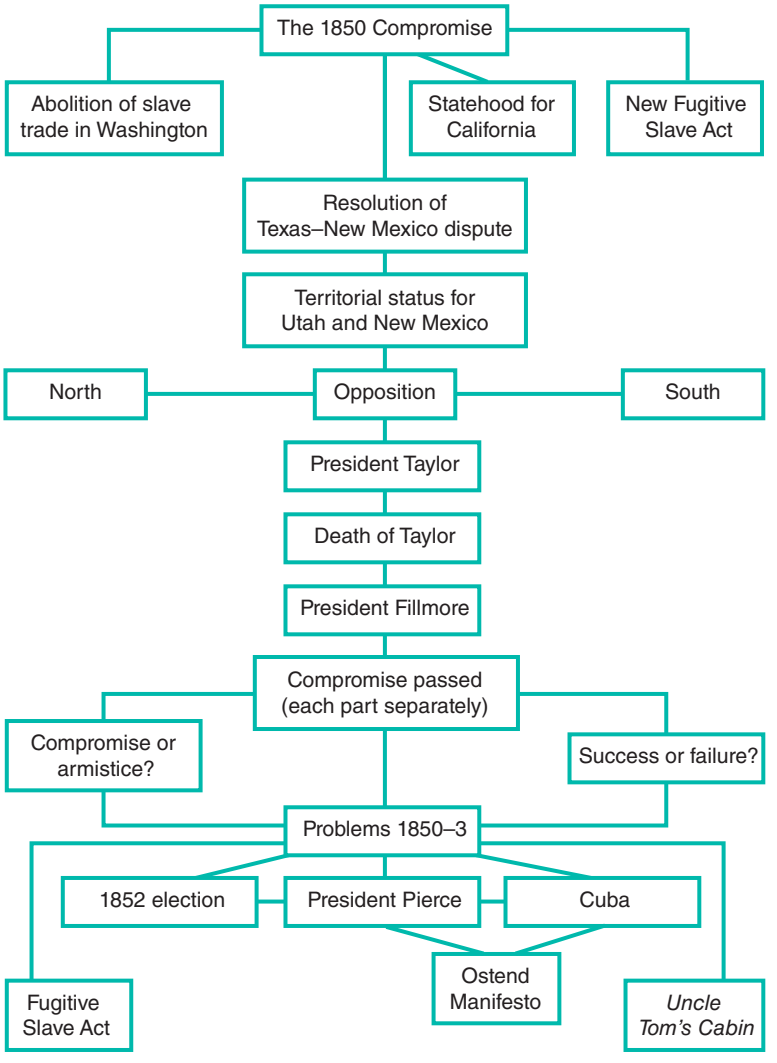
KEY TERM

Filibuster A military adventure, aimed at overthrowing a government.

The Ostend Manifesto

Still hoping to obtain Cuba, Pierce authorised Pierre Soulé, the American minister in Spain, to offer up to $130 million for the island. Events, however, soon slipped out of Pierce's control. In October 1854, the American ministers to Britain (Buchanan), France (Mason) and Spain (Soulé) met in Belgium and issued the Ostend Manifesto, hoping to put pressure on the president. This stated that Cuba 'is as necessary to the North American Republic as any of its present members'. If Spain refused to sell, then the USA would be 'justified in wresting it from Spain'. Unfortunately for Pierce, details of the Manifesto were leaked and denounced by Northern politicians. Pierce repudiated the Manifesto and Soulé resigned.

The (unsuccessful) expansionist efforts angered Northerners who believed that the South aspired to establish a Latin American slave empire. Many Southerners did so aspire, and remained optimistic about their aspirations, throughout the 1850s.



SUMMARY DIAGRAM

The 1850 Compromise

Chapter summary

The abolitionist debate

By 1850, Northerners outnumbered Southerners by a ratio of more than three to two. Given that free states had more seats in the House of Representatives, Southerners were determined to maintain a position of equality in the Senate. This meant that westward expansion was a crucial issue. If new states entered the Union as free states, Southerners feared that slavery would be declared illegal by a Northern and abolitionist-dominated Congress. Although relatively few Northerners were abolitionists, most were determined to prevent slavery's expansion. Events before and after 1846 showed that western expansion could ignite sectional confrontations. In 1849–50, Southerners had talked in terms of seceding from the Union. The 1850 Compromise had contained the immediate danger but had not resolved the problem of slavery expansion.

Examination advice

How to answer 'evaluate' questions

For questions that contain the command term evaluate, you are asked to make judgements. You should judge the available evidence and identify and discuss the most convincing elements of the argument, in addition to explaining the limitations of other elements.

Example

Evaluate the political impact of the abolitionist movement.

1 For this question you should aim to make a judgement about the degree to which the abolitionist movement impacted the politics of the nation. In order to do this you will need to evaluate the different political issues that the abolitionist movement impacted. You should put these issues in order of the degree to which they made an impact, with the most important coming first. Because the question does not specifically state North or South, you should try to write about both sections of the country. Your focus should be on politics and not the society or the economy.

2 Before writing the answer you should write out an outline – allow around five minutes to do this. For this question, you need to come up with at least three to four political issues to examine which the abolitionist movement had an impact on. Among them could be:

- *how the abolitionists tried to influence political parties and the responses to such demands*
- *the establishment of the Liberty Party*
- *how the abolitionists were not united and the consequences of such divisions*
- *how the abolitionist demands led to Southern stonewalling*
- *how the North responded to the abolitionist movement*
- *other political issues: extension of slavery in newly acquired territories.*

3 A good strategy in your introduction would be to include what you mean by political impact, since this can have a variety of meanings. Once you have done that, mention which specific items you will discuss in your essay. An example of a good introductory paragraph for this question is given on the following page.

The abolitionist movement was, in fact, a number of different groups. Some were motivated by religious impulses while others hoped to gradually reduce slavery in the USA. Because of this lack of unity, pressure on political parties and on national policy or political impact often had little focus. Many white Northerners and Southerners held similar views on the supposed inferiority of blacks and this racial antipathy did not further the eradication of slavery. Nonetheless, the issue of slavery shadowed many political decisions and compromises in the years leading up to the Civil War. The extent to which the anti-slavery groups affected these important decisions remains debatable.

4 In your essay, you might devote separate paragraphs to the political issues you listed in your outline, making judgements on the impact the abolitionist movement had on each of them. An example paragraph which evaluates the impact of the establishment of the Liberty Party is given below.

Failure to win support in both the Whig and Democrat Parties in the early 1840s led some abolitionists to form the Liberty Party. In the 1840 presidential election, the Liberty Party's candidate, James Birney, won a minuscule 7,000 votes. Four years later, Birney increased his vote total to over 62,000 votes. Many abolitionists tried to work through more mainstream political parties although this did not bring desired results. It did not help the movement that one of its most famous members, William Lloyd Garrison, refused to vote at all since the US Constitution allowed for the existence of slavery. In other words, in the 1840s, the political impact of the anti-slavery groups was minimal on the national scene.

5 Write a conclusion making a judgement about the political impact of the movement. You may well conclude that the abolitionist movement had little impact politically. That is fine but you should consider in detail why this was so in your essay. The term evaluate means you must make judgements that are supported by detail. Stronger essays will explain **why** and **how** the supporting evidence you use ties into your overall thesis. An example of a good concluding paragraph is given on the following page.

While the abolitionist movement was active from the 1830s to the 1860s, its impact on US politics was relatively insignificant. Other stronger factors prevented the anti-slavery message from impacting the political structure in the country such as the wish to put off any final decisions about the fate of slavery. However, the splintered movement did lay the groundwork for important new directions in the nation, in particular, the end of the terrible institution during the Civil War.

6 Now try writing a complete answer to the question following the advice above.



Examination practice

Below are two exam-style questions for you to practise on this topic.

1 Evaluate the impact abolitionists had on altering Northern views of slavery.

2 'The Compromise of 1850 solved little.' To what extent do you agree with this statement?
(For guidance on how to answer 'to what extent' questions, see page 160.)

CHAPTER 5

The coming of war

As long as voters placed loyalty to the Democrat or Whig party ahead of sectional loyalty, neither North nor South could easily be united one against the other. However, in the 1850s, the Whig party disintegrated. The Republican Party, drawing support only from the North, emerged to challenge the Democrats. In 1860, Republican candidate Abraham Lincoln won the presidential election. By February 1861, seven Southern states had seceded from the Union and formed the Confederacy. By April, the Confederacy was at war with the Union. To explain how and why this happened, this chapter will focus on the following key questions:

- Why did the Kansas–Nebraska Act cause such a storm?
- Why did the Republican Party become the Democrats' main rival?
- How successful was President Buchanan?
- Why did Lincoln's election lead to secession?
- Why was no compromise found to bring the seceded states back into the Union?

1 The Kansas–Nebraska problem

Key question: *Why did the Kansas–Nebraska Act cause such a storm?*

Nebraska, part of the Louisiana Purchase, was still largely unsettled in the early 1850s. While Northerners were keen to see Nebraska developed, Southerners were less enthusiastic. Nebraska lay north of latitude 36°30′ and, by the terms of the Missouri Compromise (see page 72), new states in the area would enter the Union as free states. Southern politicians, therefore, made every effort to delay granting territorial status to Nebraska.

What were Senator Douglas's motives?

The Kansas–Nebraska Act

In January 1854, Senator Douglas introduced the Kansas–Nebraska bill. His bill was designed to appeal to the South:

- It repealed the Missouri Compromise, introducing popular sovereignty in its stead.
- It divided the Nebraska territory into two: Kansas and Nebraska (see page 72). There was little chance of slavery taking hold in Nebraska: the climate was too cold for plantation agriculture. But it seemed possible it might spread to Kansas.

Douglas, a great believer in popular sovereignty, saw no problem in letting the people of Kansas–Nebraska decide their own fate. He was confident

that they would not vote for slavery. A supporter of manifest destiny (see page 62), he did not want the settlement of the West stalled by sectional controversy.

Douglas hoped to win over the South without conceding much in return. However, he miscalculated. His bill created a 'hell of a storm' in the North. It was proof to many Northerners that a **Slave Power conspiracy** was at work. Abolitionists had a field day. One of the most effective pieces of anti-slavery propaganda was a tract, written by Salmon Chase, *The Appeal of the Independent Democrats in Congress to the People of the United States*, published in January 1854 (see Source A).

KEY TERM

Slave Power conspiracy
A Northern notion that Southerners were plotting to expand slavery.

SOURCE A

***The Appeal of the Independent Democrats in Congress to the People of the United States*, Salmon Chase, 1854.**

We arraign this bill as a gross violation of a sacred pledge; as a criminal betrayal of precious rights; as part and parcel of an atrocious plot to exclude from the vast unoccupied region immigrants from the Old World and free laborers from our own states and convert it into a dreary region of despotism, inhabited by masters and slaves.

Read Source A. Why do you think the *Appeal* was so effective? ?

Initially Southerners had been apathetic about the Kansas–Nebraska bill. But the ferocity of Northern attacks led to the passage of the bill suddenly becoming a symbol of Southern honour. The result was a great Congressional struggle. After months of bitter debate, the bill became law in May 1854. Ninety per cent of Southern Congressmen voted for it; 64 per cent of Northerners voted against it. Northern Democrats splintered: 44 in the House voted for it; 43 voted against it.

By failing to predict the extent of Northern outrage generated by his measure, Douglas weakened his party, damaged his presidential ambitions and helped to revive North–South rivalry.

The 1854 mid-term elections

Why did the Whig party collapse?

In the 1854 mid-term elections the Democrats, apparently blamed for sponsoring the Kansas–Nebraska Act, lost all but 23 of their (previously 91) free state seats in Congress. Prior to 1854 the Whigs would have benefited from Democratic unpopularity. By 1854, however, the Whig party was no longer a major force in many Northern states.

The Whig collapse has often been seen as a direct result of the Kansas–Nebraska Act, which set Southern against Northern Whigs. However, Whig decline began in several free states in 1853 – before the Kansas–Nebraska debates. This was largely because of the party's failure to deal with two related issues: immigration and Catholicism.

KEY TERM

Potato famine In 1845–6, the Irish potato crop was hit by blight – a fungus which destroyed the crop. The result was a terrible famine.

Nativist/nativism Suspicion of immigrants.

Catholic immigrants

Between 1845 and 1854, some 3 million immigrants entered the USA. Over 1 million of these were Irish Catholics, escaping the horrors of the **potato famine**. German immigrants, some of whom were Catholic, outnumbered the Irish. Many Germans had sufficient funds to buy land out West. The Irish, with fewer resources, tended to settle in North-eastern cities. Americans accused the Irish of pulling down wage levels and taking jobs from native-born workers. They also associated Irish immigrants with increased crime and welfare costs.

Fear of a papal plot to subvert the USA was also deep-rooted among Protestant Americans. Many were horrified by the growth of Catholicism: between 1850 and 1854 the number of Catholic churches almost doubled. Protestant Americans resented the growing political power of Catholic voters, claiming that the Irish voted as their political bosses or their priests told them. This was seen as a threat to democracy.

Whig failure

Given that most Irish and Germans voted Democrat, that party was unlikely to support anti-immigrant or anti-Catholic measures. But the Whig party also failed to respond to **nativist** concerns. Indeed, in 1852 the Whigs were actively pro-Catholic, hoping to capture the growing immigrant vote. This strategy failed: few Catholics were persuaded to vote Whig while some traditional Whig voters refused to vote for a party which was trying to appease Catholics. Many Northerners began to look to new parties to represent their views. Disintegration of loyalty to the old parties in 1853 had little to do with sectional conflict; indeed, it occurred during a temporary lull in that conflict.

The Know Nothings

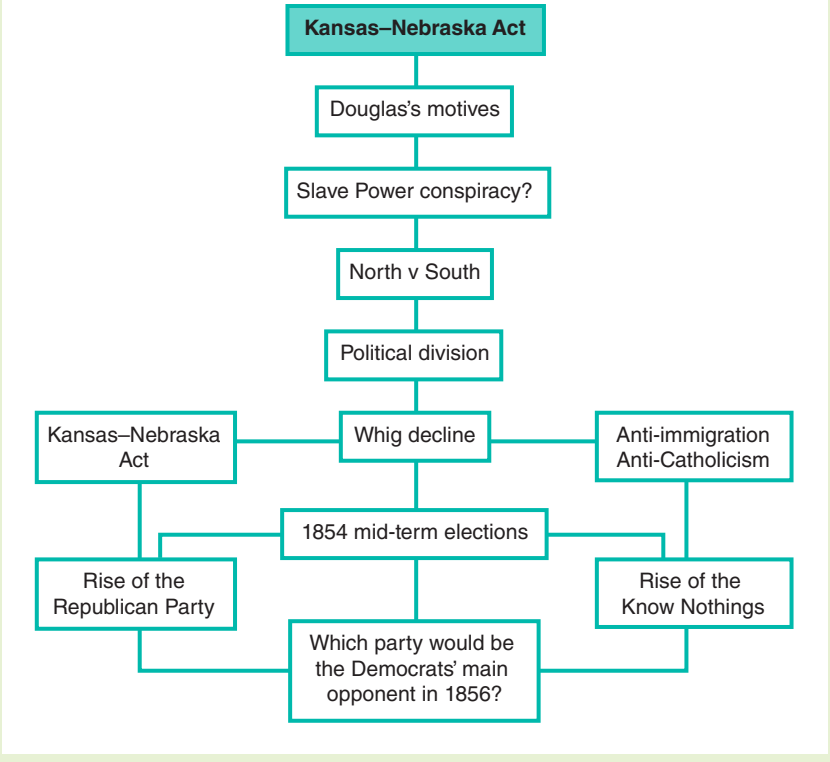
Concern about immigration and Catholicism resulted in the rise of the Know Nothing movement. (When asked questions about the order, members were supposed to reply, 'I know nothing', thereby giving the movement its name.) Know Nothings pledged to vote for no one except native-born Protestants. The movement had so much success that by 1854 it took on the characteristics of a political party, selecting its own candidates. Most Know Nothings wanted checks on immigration and a 21-year probationary period before immigrants could become full American citizens.

In 1854, the unpopularity of the Kansas–Nebraska Act, associated with the Democrats, helped the Know Nothings. With over 1 million members, the movement won 63 per cent of the vote in Massachusetts. In 1855, the order, which now called itself the American Party, took control of three more New England states and won large-scale support, mainly from ex-Whigs, in the South.

The Republican Party

The Northern electorate was not just concerned with anti-immigrant issues. The Kansas–Nebraska Act awakened the spectre of the Slave Power and many Northerners were keen to support parties opposed to slavery expansion. In 1854, several anti-slavery coalitions were formed under a variety of names. The Republican name became the most popular.

By 1854–5, it was not clear whether the Know Nothings or Republicans would pick up the tattered Whig mantle in the North. In general, the Republicans were strongest in the Mid-west, the Know Nothings in New England. However, in most free states the two parties were not necessarily in competition; indeed, they often tried to avoid a contest in order to defeat the Democrats. Many Northerners hated both Catholicism and the Slave Power.



SUMMARY DIAGRAM

The Kansas–Nebraska problem

2 The rise of the Republican Party

Key question: *Why did the Republican Party become the Democrats' main rival?*

It was clear that there would be an anti-Democrat majority in the Congress which met in December 1855. Whether the anti-Democrat Congressmen were more concerned with immigration or slavery expansion remained to be seen. At this stage many Republicans were Know Nothings and vice versa. For those 'pure' Republicans who were opposed to nativism, the 1854 elections were a major setback. Given Know Nothing strength, Republican success was far from inevitable. Indeed, most political observers expected the Know Nothings to be the Democrats' main opponents in 1856. Whereas the Republicans could never be more than a Northern party, the Know Nothings drew support from North and South.

What problems did the American Party face in 1855–6?

American Party problems

The American Party – the party of the Know Nothings – was the main anti-Democrat party in both the North and South in 1855. Ironically, Southern success was to be a major reason for the party's undoing. The Know Nothing order had won massive support in the North in 1854 because it had been able to exploit anti-slavery and nativist issues. However, by 1856, the American Party, if it was to be a national party, had no option but to drop its anti-Kansas–Nebraska position. By so doing, it lost Northern support.

Other factors damaged the party:

- The decline of immigration in the mid-1850s resulted in a decline of nativism.
- The failure of Know-Nothing-dominated legislatures to make good their campaign promises enabled critics to claim that the movement did nothing.

Events in Congress, which met in December 1855, weakened the American Party. Nativists split North and South. After a great struggle, Nathaniel Banks, an ex-Know Nothing but now a Republican, became Speaker of the House. The speakership contest helped to weld the Republicans into a more coherent party.

What were the main Republican policies?

Republican policies

The Republican Party included abolitionists (like Charles Sumner), ex-Whigs (like William Seward), ex-Democrats (like David Wilmot) and ex-Know

Nothings (like Nathaniel Banks). Not surprisingly, historians have different opinions about what the party stood for and why Northerners supported it.

It is easier to say what Republicans were against than what they were for. Almost all were opposed to the Slave Power which was seen as conspiring against Northern interests. However, Republican leaders were not consistent in defining who was conspiring. Was it planters, slaveholders or all Southerners? Republicans also had different views about the nature of the conspiracy. Many were convinced it sought to re-establish slavery in the North. Such fears were grossly exaggerated. Nevertheless, the idea of a Slave Power conspiracy was a Republican article of faith.

Most Republicans had a moral antipathy to slavery. However, while almost all were opposed to the expansion of slavery, not all supported immediate abolition. Many were horrified at the prospect of thousands of emancipated slaves pouring northwards. Relatively few believed in black equality.

Early twentieth-century historians thought that the Republican Party represented the forces of emerging capitalism and that its main concern was the promotion of industrialisation by measures such as a high tariff. Few historians now accept this thesis. Industrialisation was not a major concern of Republican voters in the 1850s, most of whom were farmers. The party itself was divided on many economic issues.

Republican leaders were also divided on nativist issues. Some wanted to reach a compromise with – or steal the clothing of – the Know Nothings. Others wanted no concessions to nativism.

The situation in Kansas 1854–6

How did events in Kansas help the Republicans?

After 1854, settlers began to move into Kansas. Their main concern was land. However, for politicians, far more was at stake. Northerners thought that if slavery expanded into Kansas it might expand anywhere. Southerners feared that a free Kansas would be another nail in the slavery coffin. Senator Seward of New York threw down the gauntlet to the South: 'We will engage in competition for the virgin soil of Kansas and God give the victory to the side which is stronger in numbers as it is in the right.' Senator Atchison of Missouri accepted the challenge. 'We are playing for a mighty stake; if we win we carry slavery to the Pacific Ocean […] if we fail, we lose Missouri, Arkansas and Texas and all the territories; the game must be played boldly.'

Northerners and Southerners tried to influence events. The Massachusetts Emigrant Aid Company, for example, sponsored over 1,500 Northerners to settle in Kansas. However, pro-slavers seemed to be in the stronger position, given Missouri's proximity to Kansas. Senator Atchison formed the Platte County Defensive Association which was pledged to ensure that Kansas became a slave state.

Elections in Kansas

In March 1855, Kansas elected its first territorial legislature. 'There are 1,100 coming over from Platte County to vote and if that ain't enough we can send 5,000 – enough to kill every God-damned abolitionist in the Territory', declared Atchison. The fact that hundreds of pro-slavery Missourians crossed into Kansas to vote (and then returned home) was probably a tactical mistake: in March 1855 pro-slavers would have won the elections anyway. The Missourians simply cast doubt on the pro-slavery victory. When the legislature, which met at Lecompton, proceeded to pass a series of tough pro-slavery laws, Northern opinion was outraged.

The Topeka government

'Free-state' settlers in Kansas, denying the validity of the pro-slavery legislature, set up their own government at Topeka. The free-staters were deeply divided between 'moderates' and 'fanatics'. While the fanatics held abolitionist views, the moderates were openly racist, opposing slavery because it would result in an influx of blacks. The Topeka government, dominated by moderates, banned blacks, slave or free, from Kansas.

'Bleeding Kansas'

In May 1856, a pro-slavery posse, trying to arrest free-state leaders, 'sacked' the town of Lawrence, burning some buildings. Northern journalists reported that dozens of free-staters were killed in the 'attack'. In reality there were no fatalities (except a pro-slaver who died when a building collapsed on him).

The Lawrence raid sparked off more serious violence. The man largely responsible for this was John Brown, a fervent abolitionist. At Pottawatomie Creek, he and several of his sons murdered five pro-slavery settlers. Northern newspapers, suppressing the facts, claimed that Brown had acted in righteous self-defence. Overnight, he became a Northern hero. In Kansas, his actions led to an increase in tension and a series of tit-for-tat killings. The Northern press again exaggerated the situation, describing it as civil war.

With events seemingly drifting out of control, Pierce appointed a new governor, John Geary, who managed to patch up a truce between the warring factions. Nevertheless, events in Kansas, and the distorted reporting of them, helped to boost Republican fortunes. 'Bleeding Kansas' became a rallying cry for Northerners opposed to what they perceived to be the Slave Power at work.

Why did Sumner's beating help the Republicans?

'Bleeding Sumner'

A single event in Congress in May 1856 may have been even more important in helping Republican fortunes than the situation in Kansas. Following a speech in which Senator Charles Sumner attacked Southern Senator Butler, Congressman Preston Brooks entered the Senate, found Sumner at his desk and proceeded to beat him, shattering his cane in the process. 'Bleeding

Sumner' seems to have outraged Northerners more than 'bleeding Kansas'. Here was clear evidence of the Slave Power at work, using brute force to silence free speech.

While Sumner became a Northern martyr, Brooks became a Southern hero. Resigning from Congress, Brooks stood for re-election and won easily. Scores of Southerners sent him new canes to replace the one he had broken when beating Sumner.

SOURCE B

A Northern cartoon condemning Preston Brooks for his caning of Sumner. The cartoon shows Southern Senators enjoying the sight and preventing intervention by Sumner's friends.

In what respects is Source B biased? ?



The 1856 presidential election

What were the main results of the 1856 election?

The American Party held its national convention in February 1856. After a call to repeal the Kansas–Nebraska Act was defeated, many Northern delegates left the convention. (After forming a splinter 'North American' Party, most drifted into the Republican Party.) The American Party went on to select ex-President Fillmore as its presidential candidate. Fillmore had pro-Southern sympathies (in 1850 he had signed the Fugitive Slave Act – see pages 74–5) and thus had limited appeal in the North.

John C. Frémont

Republican leaders decided that the party's best presidential candidate would be John C. Frémont. Born in the South, Frémont had been a successful Western explorer: many saw him (wrongly) as the 'Conqueror of California' in 1846 (see page 64). Relatively young (he was 43 in 1856), he had limited political experience. An ex-Know Nothing, he had been a (Democrat) senator for California for just 17 days.

A Southern-born, ex-Know Nothing and ex-Democrat was a strange choice for Republican candidate. But the romance surrounding Frémont's 'path-finding' career was likely to make him popular. Those who knew Frémont were aware that he was rash and egotistical. However, these flaws in character could easily be concealed from the voters.

The Republican platform declared that Congress had 'both the right and the imperative duty … to prohibit in the Territories those twin relics of barbarism – **Polygamy** and Slavery'. (The polygamy reference was a popular attack on Mormon practices in Utah.) The platform also supported the notion of a Northern Pacific railroad. The Republican slogan was: 'Free Soil, Free Labour, Free Men, Frémont.'

KEY TERM

Polygamy The practice of having more than one wife.

Battleground state A state, usually evenly politically divided, whose voters might well determine an election's outcome.

The Democrats in 1856

President Pierce was so unpopular that he faced almost certain defeat. Douglas, the most dynamic Democrat, was tarnished by events in Kansas. The Democrats thus nominated James Buchanan, a politician who had spent four decades in public service. A Northerner, he sympathised with – and was thus acceptable to – the South. Given that he came from Pennsylvania, regarded as the key **battleground state**, he was probably the Democrats' strongest candidate. The Democratic platform upheld the 1850 Compromise and endorsed popular sovereignty.

The 1856 campaign

In the North, the contest was essentially between Buchanan and Frémont. In the South, it was between Buchanan and Fillmore. For the first time since 1849–50 there was widespread fear for the Union's safety. If Frémont won, it was conceivable that Southern states would secede.

Republicans, stressing that Frémont was young and vibrant, portrayed Buchanan as an old fogey and a lackey of the South. The Democrats, claiming that they were the party of Union, attacked the Republicans for being rabid abolitionists who aimed to elevate blacks to equality with whites.

The 1856 result

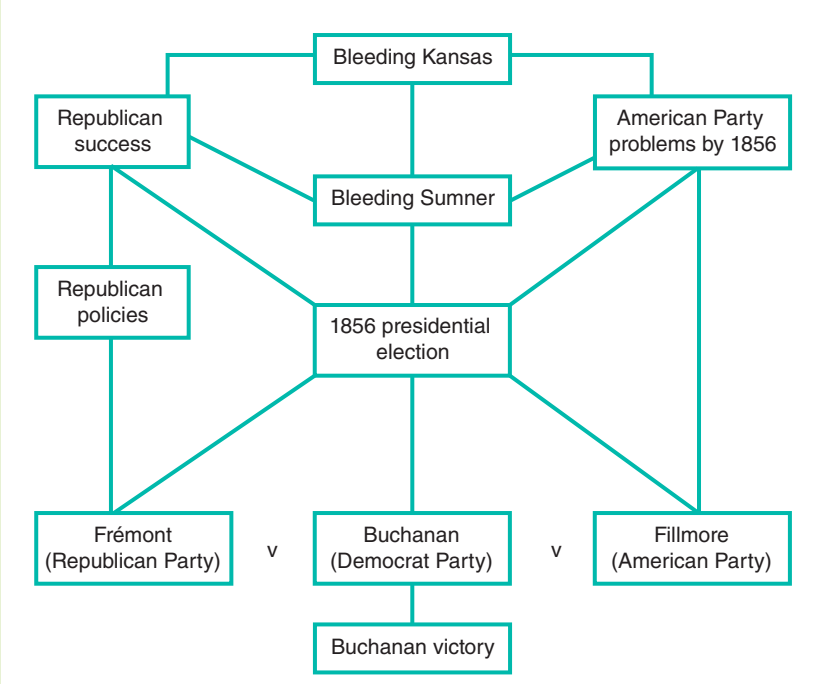
In November, Fillmore obtained 871,731 votes (21.6 per cent of the total) but only eight electoral college votes. Frémont won 1,340,537 votes (33.1 per cent) and 114 electoral votes. Buchanan, with 1,832,955 votes (45.3 per cent) and 174 electoral votes, became president. He won all but one Southern state plus Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Indiana, Illinois and California. Frémont won the rest of the free states.

The Democrats had cause for celebration. They had seen off the Fillmore challenge in the South and retained their traditional supporters – Catholics and Mid-western farmers – in the North.

While some leading Republicans were disappointed by the result, they too had cause for optimism. Their party had:

- trounced the American Party
- come close to capturing the presidency. If the Republicans had carried Pennsylvania and Illinois, Frémont would have become president.

Republican pundits, confident that they could win over American Party supporters in the North, were soon predicting victory in 1860. However, that victory was far from certain. Conceivably the Republican Party could collapse as quickly as it had risen.



SUMMARY DIAGRAM

The rise of the Republican Party

3 The presidency of James Buchanan

Key question: How successful was President Buchanan?

Buchanan's election had prevented a major schism. If the problem of Kansas could be solved, then sectional tension was likely to ease. No other territory in the immediate future was likely to be so contentious. Buchanan seemed 'safe'. He had served in both the House and Senate, in the Cabinet, and as US minister in Russia and Britain. His position seemed strong. Both Houses of Congress and the Supreme Court were dominated by Democrats.

However, from the start, many Northerners feared that Buchanan was a tool of the Slave Power. His actions soon confirmed this fear. Ideologically attached to the South and aware of his dependence on Southern support, Buchanan chose a pro-Southern cabinet (four of its members were slave owners). By the end of 1857, historian Kenneth Stampp has claimed that North and South had probably reached 'the political point of no return'. The events of 1857, according to Stampp, were decisive in preventing a peaceful resolution to sectional strife. Buchanan, in Stampp's view, must shoulder much of the blame, pursuing policies which:

- contributed to the fragmentation of the Democrat Party
- pushed most Northerners into the Republican camp.

Why was the Dred Scott case important?

The Dred Scott case

Dred Scott was a slave who had accompanied his master (an army surgeon) first to Illinois, then to the Wisconsin territory, before returning to Missouri. In the 1840s, with the help of anti-slavery lawyers, Scott went before the Missouri courts, claiming he was free on the grounds that he had resided in a free state and in a free territory. The Scott case, long and contentious, eventually reached the Supreme Court. By March 1857, the Court – composed of five Southerners (including Chief Justice Roger Taney) and four Northerners – was ready to give judgement.

KEY TERM

Inaugural address
A president's first speech, made immediately after he has been sworn in as president.

Buchanan referred to the case in his **inaugural address**. Claiming (not quite truthfully) that he knew nothing of the Supreme Court's decision, he said he was ready to 'cheerfully submit' to its verdict and urged all good citizens to do likewise. Two days later the decision was made public. The Court decided (by seven votes to two) the following:

- Scott could not sue for his freedom. Black Americans, whether slave or free, did not have the same rights as whites.
- Scott's stay in Illinois did not make him free.
- Scott's stay in Wisconsin made no difference. The Missouri Compromise ban on slavery in territories north of 36°30' was illegal. US citizens had the right to take their 'property' into the territories.

Northern reaction

Northerners were horrified. Here was further proof that Buchanan, the Supreme Court and the Democrat Party were involved in a Slave Power conspiracy. Republicans claimed that a whispered conversation between Taney and Buchanan on inauguration day proved that the president had been aware of the Court's decision when he asked Americans to accept it. The Northern press launched a fierce onslaught on the Supreme Court and some editors talked openly of defying the law. However, the judgement was easier to denounce than defy. In part, it simply annulled a law which had already been repealed by the Kansas–Nebraska Act. The Court's decision

even had little effect on Scott who, soon after the verdict, was bought by the sons of one of his previous owners and set free.

Nevertheless, the judgement was important. Many Northerners saw it as an attempt to undermine:

- the Republican Party
- the concept of popular sovereignty – that territorial legislatures could prohibit slavery if they chose.

The Panic of 1857

Why did the Panic of 1857 assist the Republican Party?

In 1857, US industry was hit by a depression called the Panic of 1857, which resulted in mass Northern unemployment. Buchanan, believing the government should not involve itself in economic matters, did nothing. Inevitably, he and his party were blamed by Northerners for their seeming indifference. Republican economic proposals – internal improvement measures and higher protective tariffs – were blocked by Democrats in Congress. The depression, albeit short-lived (it was over by 1859), helped the Republicans in the 1858 mid-term elections.

Problems in Kansas

Why were events in Kansas so important nationally?

In Kansas, Buchanan faced a situation which seemed to offer some hope. Although there were still two governments (at Lecompton and Topeka), Governor Geary had restored order. It was obvious to Geary, and to other independent observers, that free-staters were now in the majority. Given his declared commitment to popular sovereignty, all that Buchanan needed to do was ensure that the will of the majority prevailed in Kansas. This would deprive the Republicans of one of their most effective issues.

In March 1857, Geary resigned and Buchanan appointed Robert Walker, an experienced Southern politician, in his place. Walker only accepted the job after being assured by Buchanan that he would support fair elections.

Arriving in Kansas in May, Walker quickly realised that most settlers opposed slavery. Accordingly, he decided that his aim should be to bring Kansas into the union as a free, Democrat-voting state. Realising that aim proved difficult. In February 1857, the Lecompton government had authorised the election (to be held in June) of a convention to draw up a constitution that would set Kansas on the road to statehood. Free-staters, suspecting that any election organised by pro-slavers would be rigged, refused to get involved. Thus only 2,200 of the 9,000 people entitled to vote did so and pro-slavers won all the convention seats.

Pro-slaver success, while making a mockery of popular sovereignty, raised the expectations of Southerners who realised that the creation of a new slave state was now a distinct possibility. Meanwhile, elections for the Kansas territorial legislature were held in October.

By now Walker had managed to convince free-staters that they should participate in the electoral process, promising that he would do all he could to see that the elections were fairly conducted. When the pro-slavers declared victory, he set about investigating charges of fraudulence. The charges were easily confirmed. Hundreds of fictitious people had been recorded as voting for the pro-slavers. Walker overturned enough results to give the free-staters a majority in the legislature.

The Lecompton Constitution

The constitutional convention was now the last refuge of the pro-slavers. Few thought that it represented majority opinion in Kansas. Yet it proceeded to draft a pro-slavery constitution. While agreeing to allow a referendum on its proposals, it offered voters something of a spurious choice. They could accept the pro-slavery constitution as it was. Or they could accept another constitution which banned the future importation of slaves but which guaranteed the rights of slaveholders already in Kansas. While Walker denounced the Lecompton convention's actions as a 'vile fraud' and urged Buchanan to repudiate them, Southerners urged him to endorse them. Buchanan decided to reject Walker's advice. Walker, in consequence, resigned.

In December, Kansas voted on the Lecompton Constitution. In fact, most free-staters abstained in protest. The pro-slave returns showed 6,143 for the constitution with slavery and 569 for it without slavery. Buchanan claimed that the question of slavery had been 'fairly and explicitly referred to the people'.

Buchanan versus Douglas

By accepting the Lecompton Constitution, Buchanan gave the Republicans massive political ammunition. More importantly, he also enraged Northern Democrats who were committed to popular sovereignty. In an impassioned speech in the Senate, Douglas attacked the Lecompton Constitution. Southern Democrats immediately denounced Douglas as a traitor. The Democrat Party, like almost every other American institution, was now split North and South.

A titanic Congressional contest followed, with Douglas siding with the Republicans. While the Senate passed the Constitution, the real battle was in the House. Despite huge patronage pressure, enough Northern Democrats opposed Buchanan, ensuring that the Lecompton Constitution was rejected by 120 votes to 112.

Buchanan now accepted that Kansas should vote again on the measure. The vote, conducted as fairly as possible in August 1858, resulted in a free-state victory: 11,300 voted against the Lecompton Constitution while only 1,788 voted for it. Kansas now set about drawing up a free-state constitution. It finally joined the Union in January 1861 as a free state.

The 1858 elections

What issues divided Lincoln and Douglas?

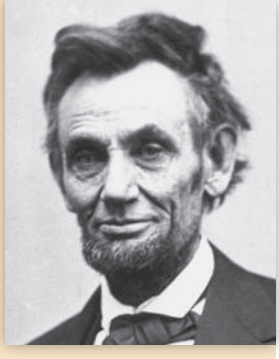
The 1858 mid-term elections came at a bad time for Northern Democrats, with the party split between those who supported Buchanan and those who supported Douglas. Given that Douglas had to stand for re-election as Senator for Illinois, national attention focused on the Illinois campaign. The Republicans chose Abraham Lincoln to run against Douglas.

Abraham Lincoln

Born in a log cabin and with little formal schooling, Lincoln in many ways epitomised the American Dream. Able and ambitious, he won the first of four terms as an Illinois state legislator in 1834. A loyal Whig (his hero was Henry Clay), he was elected to the House of Representatives in 1846, where he spoke in opposition to the Mexican War. Defeated in 1848, he returned to Illinois, resumed his successful law practice and for a few years took less interest in politics.

The Kansas–Nebraska Act brought him back into politics. He hoped at first that the Act would bring new life to the Whigs. Once it was clear that the future lay with the Republicans, he threw himself vigorously into the new cause. Although he had not much of a national reputation in 1858, he was

Abraham Lincoln, 1809–65



Abraham Lincoln was born in Kentucky in 1809. Migrating to Illinois in 1831, he tried various occupations – store clerk, postmaster and surveyor – and served briefly in the Black Hawk War (1832) but saw no action. Joining the Whig Party, he was elected to the Illinois state legislature in 1834. In 1837 he moved to Springfield, Illinois's state capital, where law and politics absorbed his interests. In 1842 he married Mary Todd, daughter of a Kentucky slaveholder. Elected to the House of Representatives in 1846, he served a term in Congress, during which he opposed the Mexican War. In 1858 he challenged Douglas for election as senator for Illinois. Defeated in 1858, he went on to defeat Douglas in the presidential election of 1860. His election helped to bring about civil war.

As President, he led the Union to victory. In 1862 he issued the Emancipation Proclamation, which freed slaves in rebel areas from 1 January 1863 (see pages 205–6). He was re-elected president in 1864 but assassinated in April 1865 (see page 211).

Lincoln was complex and enigmatic. On the one hand he was a calculating politician, often non-committal and evasive. On the other, he was a humane, witty man who never seemed to worry much about his own bruised ego. Historians continue to debate whether he was moderate, radical or conservative. He was certainly cautious, preferring to think over problems slowly and deliberately before reaching a decision. This was true on the slavery issue. While he had always been opposed to slavery, he realised that it was divisive and had kept quiet on the subject for much of his early political career. He had shown no personal animosity towards slave owners; indeed he had married one.

Chosen to run against Douglas, he declared in June 1858:

'A House divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved – I do not expect the house to fall – but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing or all the other.'

well known in Illinois. Douglas respected Lincoln, commenting: 'I shall have my hands full. He is the strong man of the party – full of wit, facts, dates – and the best stump speaker with his droll ways and dry jokes, in the West. He is as honest as he is shrewd.'

The Lincoln–Douglas debates

Douglas agreed to meet Lincoln for seven open-air debates. These debates, which ran from August to October 1858 and which drew vast crowds, have become part of American political folklore. While visually different – Lincoln was a gawky 6 feet 4 inches tall, Douglas a foot shorter – both men were gifted speakers.

The debates were confined almost exclusively to three topics – race, slavery and slavery expansion. By today's standards, Lincoln and Douglas do not seem far apart. This is perhaps not surprising: both were moderates and both were fighting for the middle ground. Both considered blacks to be inferior to whites. Lincoln declared: 'I am not, nor ever have been in favour of bringing about in any way the social and political equality of the white and black races – that I am not nor ever have been in favour of making voters or jurors of negroes, nor of qualifying them to hold office, nor to intermarry with white people.' Even the difference between Lincoln's free-soil doctrine and Douglas's popular sovereignty, in terms of practical impact, was limited: neither man doubted that popular sovereignty would keep slavery out of the territories.

However, the two did differ in one key respect. Douglas never once said in public that slavery was morally wrong. Lincoln may not have believed in racial equality but he did believe that blacks and whites shared a common humanity: 'If slavery is not wrong, then nothing is wrong. I can not remember when I did not think so.' He did not expect slavery to wither and die immediately. He did not suppose that 'the ultimate extinction would occur in less than a hundred years at the least', but he was convinced that 'ultimate extinction' should be the goal.

The Illinois result

Lincoln won 125,000 popular votes to Douglas's 121,000. However, Douglas's supporters kept control of the Illinois legislature, ensuring that Douglas was re-elected as senator. This was a significant triumph for Douglas, ensuring that he would be in a strong position to battle for the presidential candidacy in 1860. However, during the debates with Lincoln, Douglas had said much that alienated Southerners, not least his stressing of the **Freeport Doctrine**. Although Lincoln had lost, he had emerged from the election as a Republican spokesman of national stature.

The 1858 results

Helped by the American Party's collapse, Republicans won control of the House in the 1858 elections. The Republican share of the vote in the crucial states of Pennsylvania, Indiana, Illinois and New Jersey rose from 35 per cent

KEY TERM

Freeport Doctrine
The opinion that voters in a territory could exclude slavery by refusing to enact laws that gave legal protection to slaveholders, thus effectively invalidating the Dred Scott ruling.

in 1856 to 52 per cent in 1858. If the voting pattern was repeated in 1860, the Republicans would win the presidency.

John Brown's raid

How significant was Brown's raid?

John Brown had risen to fame – or infamy – in Kansas (see page 88). Now in his late fifties, Brown was still determined to do something decisive for the anti-slavery cause. Some thought he was mad. (There was a history of insanity in his family.) However, many abolitionists believed that Brown was a man of moral conviction. The fact that he was able to win financial support from hard-headed Northern businessmen is testimony to both his charisma and the intensity of abolitionist sentiment.

On the night of 16 October 1859, Brown and eighteen men left their base in Maryland and rode to the federal **arsenal** at Harper's Ferry. Brown's aim was to seize weapons, retreat to the Appalachians and spark a slave revolt. The fact that it was impossible to inform the slaves in advance of his intentions was a major – but by no means the only – flaw in Brown's plan.

KEY TERM

Arsenal A place where military supplies are stored or made.

State militia Able-bodied men of military age who could be called up to fight by a state in an emergency.

Brown captured the arsenal with remarkable ease. A few slaves were induced or compelled to join Brown and a number of hostages were taken. Then things began to go wrong. A train pulled into Harper's Ferry, shots were fired and the first person to die was a black baggage master. Rather than flee, Brown took refuge in the arsenal's fire-engine house. Virginia and Maryland **state militia** units and a detachment of troops, led by Colonel Robert E. Lee, converged on the town. A 36-hour siege followed with Brown threatening to kill the hostages and Lee attempting to persuade Brown to give himself up. On 18 October, Lee ordered the fire-engine house to be stormed. In the ensuing struggle Brown was wounded and captured. Ten of his 'army' were killed (including two of his sons). Seven other people also died.

The results of Brown's raid

Brown was tried for treason. Refusing a plea of insanity, he determined to die a martyr's death. Found guilty, he was executed on 2 December 1859. In his last letter he wrote: 'I, John Brown, am now quite certain that the crimes of this guilty land will never be purged away but with Blood.'

Most Southerners were appalled at what had happened. Their worst fears had been realised. An abolitionist had tried to stir up a slave revolt. Aware that Brown had considerable financial support, they suspected that most Northerners sympathised with his action. While some Northerners did indeed regard Brown as a hero, Northern Democrats condemned him out of hand, as did many leading Republicans. Few Southerners were reassured. Most saw Republicans and abolitionists (like Brown) as one and the same.

Sectional tension 1859–60

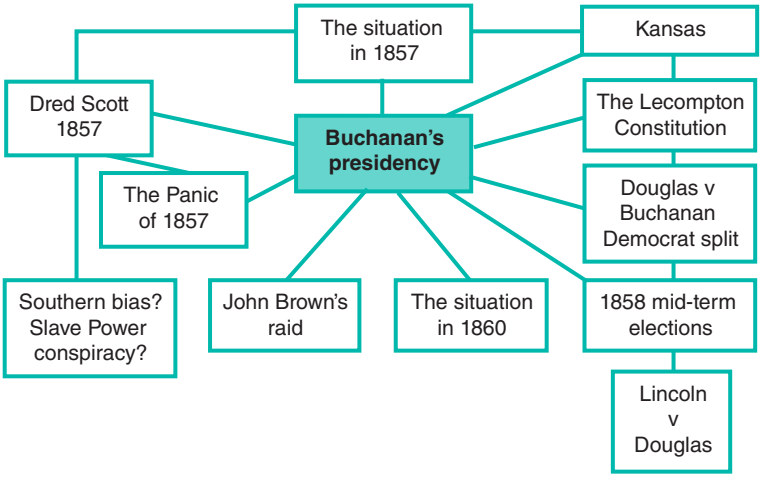
Why was sectional tension so high by 1859–60?

Over the winter of 1859–60 there were rumours of slave insurrection across the South. Local vigilante committees were set up and slave patrols

strengthened. Southern state governments purchased additional weapons and Southern militia units drilled rather more than previously.

When Congress met in December 1859, both Houses divided along sectional lines. Northern and Southern politicians exchanged insults and accusations, carrying inflammatory rhetoric to new heights of passion.

Buchanan, who had sought to avoid controversy, had failed. Far from easing tension, his policies had helped to exacerbate sectional strife. His presidency must thus be regarded as one of the great failures of leadership in US history.



SUMMARY DIAGRAM

The presidency of James Buchanan

3 The 1860 election and secession

Key question: Why did Lincoln's election lead to secession?

The prospect of a Republican triumph in 1860 filled Southerners with dread and outrage. Submission to the Republicans, declared Mississippi Senator Jefferson Davis, 'would be intolerable to a proud people'. If a Republican did become president, then plenty of Southerners were prepared to consider the possibility of secession.

Why did the Democrats divide?

Democratic division

If the Republicans were to be defeated it seemed essential that rifts within the Democratic Party should be healed. Douglas, determined to run for

president, made some efforts to build bridges to the South in 1859–60. Rationally, he was the South's best hope: he was the only Democrat who was likely to carry some free states – essential if the Democrats were to win the election. But Douglas's stand against the Lecompton Constitution had alienated him from most Southerners.

The Democratic convention

Events at the Democratic convention, which met in April 1860 in Charleston, South Carolina, showed that the party, never mind the country, was a house divided against itself. From Douglas's point of view, Charleston, situated in the most fire-eating of the Southern states, was an unfortunate choice for the convention. Townspeople, who crowded into the convention hall, made clear their opposition to Douglas. Nevertheless, delegates were appointed according to the size of a state's population, ensuring that Northern Democrats outnumbered Southerners. When Northerners blocked a proposal which would have pledged the party to protect slaveholders' rights in the territories, some 50 delegates from the lower South left the convention.

Unable to reach consensus on policy, the Democrats found it equally impossible to nominate a candidate. Although Douglas had the support of more than half the delegates, he failed to win the two-thirds majority that Democrat candidates were required to achieve. The convention thus agreed to reconvene at Baltimore in June.

Douglas versus Breckinridge

When some of the Southern delegates who had quit the Charleston convention tried to take their seats at Baltimore, the convention, dominated by Douglas's supporters, preferred to take pro-Douglas delegates from the lower South. This led to another Southern walk-out. With so many Southern delegates gone, Douglas won the Democratic nomination.

Southern Democrats now set up their own convention and nominated the current Vice-President John Breckinridge of Kentucky on a platform that called for the federal government to protect slavery in the territories.

The Democrat split is often seen as ensuring Republican success. However, even without the split, the Republicans were odds-on favourite to win. The Democrat schism may actually have weakened the Republicans. The fact that Douglas could now campaign in the North without having to try to maintain a united national party probably helped his cause.

Lincoln's nomination

Why did the Republicans nominate Lincoln?

The Republican convention met in May in Chicago, Illinois. While opposed to any extension of slavery, the Republicans declared that they had no intention of interfering with slavery where it already existed. Their platform condemned Brown's raid as 'the gravest of crimes' and called for:

- higher tariffs
- free 160-acre homesteads for Western settlers
- a Northern trans-continental railway.

William Seward, governor of New York for four years and a senator for twelve, was favourite to win the Republican nomination. However, the fact that he had been a major figure in public life for so long meant that he had many enemies. Although he was actually a pragmatic politician who disdained extremism, he was seen as holding militant abolitionist views. Moreover, he had a long record of hostility to nativism. His nomination, therefore, might make ex-Know Nothings think twice about voting Republican.

Although there were several other potential candidates, Seward's main opponent turned out to be Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln had several things in his favour:

- He came from the key state of Illinois, a state whose voters might decide the 1860 election.
- His debates with Douglas had enhanced his reputation.
- In 1859–60 he had made dozens of speeches across the North, gaining friends.
- Given that it was difficult to attach an ideological label to him, he was able to appear to be all things to all men.
- His lack of administrative experience helped his reputation for honesty.
- The fact that the convention was held in Chicago allowed his campaign managers to pack the hall with his supporters.

On the first ballot, Seward won 173 votes: a majority – but not the 233 votes needed for an absolute majority. Lincoln had 102 votes, well behind Seward but more than twice the votes of anyone else. With the race now between Seward and Lincoln, the votes of other candidates drifted to Lincoln. The second ballot was very close. By the third ballot there was an irresistible momentum in Lincoln's favour. Lincoln's campaign managers almost certainly made secret deals with delegates from Pennsylvania and Indiana, to the effect that Lincoln would appoint Cameron (from Pennsylvania) and Caleb Smith (from Indiana) to his cabinet. These deals helped Lincoln to win the nomination on the third ballot.

Why did Lincoln win?

Lincoln elected president

The Constitutional Unionist Party

The – new – Constitutional Unionist Party mounted a challenge for the presidency. Composed mainly of ex-Whigs, its main strength lay in the upper South. The party nominated John Bell of Tennessee as its presidential candidate. Its platform was the shortest in US political history: 'The Constitution of the Country, the Union of the States and the Enforcement of the Laws of the United States'. Essentially the party wanted to remove the slavery question from the political arena, thus relieving sectional strife.

The campaign

In the North the main fight was between Lincoln and Douglas. Douglas, Bell and Breckinridge fought it out in the South. Douglas was the only candidate who actively involved himself in the campaign. At some personal risk, he warned Southerners of the dangerous consequences of secession.

Throughout the campaign, Lincoln remained in Springfield, saying nothing. Perhaps he should have made some effort to reassure Southerners that he was not a major threat to their section. However, he could hardly go out of his way to appease the South: this would have done his cause no good in the North. Moreover, it is difficult to see what he could have said to allay Southern fears, given that the very existence of his party was offensive to Southerners.

Although Lincoln, Bell and Breckinridge kept silent this did not prevent their supporters campaigning for them. Republicans held torchlight processions and carried wooden rails, embodying the notion that Lincoln (who was supposed to have split rails as a youth) was a self-made man. Republican propaganda concentrated on the Slave Power conspiracy. Southern Democrats stereotyped all Republicans as abolitionists.

In some Northern states the three anti-Republican parties tried to unite. However, these efforts at 'fusion' were too little and too late and were bedevilled by bitter feuds.

The election results

In November, 81 per cent of the electorate voted. Bell won 593,000 votes (39 per cent of the Southern vote) carrying the states of Virginia, Kentucky and Tennessee. Breckinridge, with 843,000 votes (45 per cent of the Southern vote), won eleven of the fifteen slave states. Douglas obtained 1,383,000 votes – mainly from the North – but won only two states, Missouri and New Jersey. Lincoln won 1,866,000 votes – 40 per cent of the total. Although he got no votes at all in ten Southern states (where he and his party were not even on the ballot), he won 54 per cent of the free state vote, winning every state, New Jersey apart. With a majority of 180 to 123 in the electoral college, he became president. Even if the opposition had combined against him in every free state, Lincoln would still have triumphed.

Why did Northerners vote Republican?

Northerners voted for Lincoln because he seemed to represent their region. A vote for Lincoln was a vote against the Slave Power. Slavery and the Slave Power conspiracy, however, were not the only concerns of Northerners. Nativism had not disappeared with the Know Nothings' demise. Although the party took an ambiguous stand on nativist issues, anti-Catholic Northerners had little option but to vote Republican, if only because the Democratic Party remained the home of Irish and German Catholics. Many Northerners approved the Republican economic proposals. The corruption

issue was also important. In 1860, a House committee had found corruption at every level of Buchanan's government. This had tarnished the Democratic Party. 'Honest Abe' Lincoln, by contrast, had a reputation for integrity.

Why and how did the lower South secede?

Secession

Rationally, there were excellent reasons why Lincoln's victory should not have sparked Southern secession:

- Lincoln had promised he would not interfere with slavery in those states where it existed.
- Even if Lincoln harboured secret ambitions to abolish slavery, there was little he could do: his party did not control Congress.
- Secession would mean abandoning an enforceable Fugitive Slave Act.
- Secession might lead to civil war, which would threaten slavery far more than Lincoln's election.

Few Southerners regarded things so calmly.

The Southern mood

Most Southerners were outraged that a Northern anti-slavery party had captured the presidency. Lincoln was depicted as a rabid abolitionist who would encourage slave insurrections. Southerners feared they would be encircled by more free states and that, ultimately, slavery would be voted out of existence. 'A party founded on the single sentiment … of hatred of African slavery, is now the controlling power', declared the *Richmond Examiner* in Virginia in November 1860.

For more than a generation Southerners had seen themselves as the aggrieved innocents in an unequal struggle that unleashed more and more Northern aggressions on Southern rights. They believed they had been denied their fair share of Western territories and unfairly taxed through high tariffs to subsidise Northern industry. Honour demanded that a stand be taken against the latest outrage, the election of Lincoln. Across the South there was a strange mixture of moods – hysteria, despondency and elation. Fire-eaters, who had agitated for Southern independence, capitalised on the mood. Long on the fringe of Southern politics, they now found themselves supported by 'mainstream' politicians.

Problems for the secessionists

Secession was not inevitable. There was still much Unionist sympathy in the South. Nor was there any great Southern organisation that might organise a secessionist movement. Southerners were loyal to their state rather than to the 'South'. There had never been a Southern nation. Nor was the South united. Virtually every state was rife with tensions, often between small farmers and planters.

There was not even unity on the best political strategy to adopt. While some believed that Lincoln's election was grounds enough for secession, others thought it best to wait until he took hostile action against the South. 'Immediate' secessionists feared that if they forced the issue, they might destroy the unity they sought to create. How to force the issue was another problem. If individual states acted alone, there was the danger that they would receive no support, as South Carolina had found in 1832 (see pages 38–9). Yet trying to organise a mass move for secession might ensure that nothing happened, as in 1849–50 (see page 73).

South Carolina secedes

Events moved with a rapidity few had foreseen. On 10 November, South Carolina's state legislature called for elections to a convention to meet on 17 December to decide whether the state would secede. This move created a chain reaction across the lower South. Individual states committed themselves, initially, to individual action. However, it was clear that Southerners were also committed to joint action. There was liaison between Southern states at various levels but particularly between Southern Congressmen. When Congress met in December, 30 representatives from nine states declared: 'We are satisfied the honour, safety and independence of the Southern people are to be found only in a Southern Confederacy – a result to be obtained only by separate state secession.'

Separate state secession was not long in coming. On 20 December, the South Carolina convention voted 169 to 0 for secession. The state, claiming it now 'resumed her separate and equal place among nations', blamed the North for attacking slavery:

> *For twenty-five years this agitation has been steadily increasing, until it has now secured to its aid the power of the common Government … A geographical line has been drawn across the Union, and all the States north of that line have united in the election of a man to the high office of President of the United States whose opinions and purposes are hostile to slavery.*

South Carolina sent commissioners to other Southern states to propose a meeting, in Montgomery, Alabama on 4 February 1861, to create a new government.

Secession spreads

Over the winter of 1860–1, the election of delegates for conventions that would decide on secession took place across the South. Voters generally had a choice between 'immediate secessionists' and 'cooperationists'. While the standpoint of immediate secessionists was clear, cooperationists represented a wide spectrum of opinion. Some were genuine secessionists but believed the time was not yet right to secede; others were Unionists, opposed to secession. Historians find it hard to determine the exact distribution of voters

along this spectrum. The situation is even more confused because some candidates committed themselves to no position:

- In Mississippi there were 12,000 votes for candidates whose views remain unknown; 12,218 voted for cooperationist candidates; 16,800 voted for immediate secession. On 9 January 1861, the Mississippi convention supported secession by 85 votes to 15.
- On 10 January, a Florida convention voted 62 to 7 for secession – but cooperationists won over 35 per cent of the vote.
- In Alabama, secessionists won 35,600 votes, cooperationists 28,100. The convention voted to secede by 61 votes to 39 on 11 January.
- Secessionist candidates in Georgia won 44,152 votes, cooperationists 41,632. Georgia's convention voted to secede on 19 January by 208 votes to 89.
- In Louisiana, secessionists won 20,214 votes, cooperationists 18,451. On 26 January the convention voted to secede by 113 votes to 17.
- A Texas convention voted (on 1 February) for secession by 166 votes to 8. Texas then had a referendum to ratify the convention's action. Secession was approved by 44,317 votes to 13,020.

A slave power conspiracy?

Republicans saw events in the South as a continuation of the Slave Power conspiracy. They claimed that a few planters had conned the electorate into voting for secession, to which most Southerners were not really committed.

The debate about whether secession was led by an aristocratic clique or was a genuinely democratic act has continued. Slaveholders certainly dominated politics in many lower South states. Texas apart, no state held a referendum on the secession issue. Areas with few slaves tended to vote against disunion. Conversely, secession sentiment was strongest wherever the percentage of slaves was highest. According to historian David Potter, 'To a much greater degree than the slaveholders desired, secession had become a slave owners' movement.' Potter believed that a secessionist minority, with a clear purpose, seized the momentum and, at a time of excitement and confusion, won mass support.

Nevertheless, Potter conceded that the secessionists acted democratically and in an 'open and straightforward' manner. Given the huge support for secession, it is hard to claim that there was a conspiracy to thwart the expressed will of the majority. While secessionists opposed efforts by cooperationists to submit the secession ordinances to referendums, this would probably have been superfluous. The electorate had made its position clear in the convention elections.

The upper South

In January 1861, the state legislatures of Arkansas, Virginia, Missouri, Tennessee and North Carolina all called elections for conventions to decide on secession. The election results proved that the upper South was far less secessionist

inclined than the lower South. In Virginia only 32 immediate secessionists won seats in a convention with 152 members. Tennessee and North Carolina had referendums which opposed conventions being held. Arkansas voted for a convention but delegates rejected secession. Secessionists made no headway in Maryland, Delaware, Missouri or Kentucky.

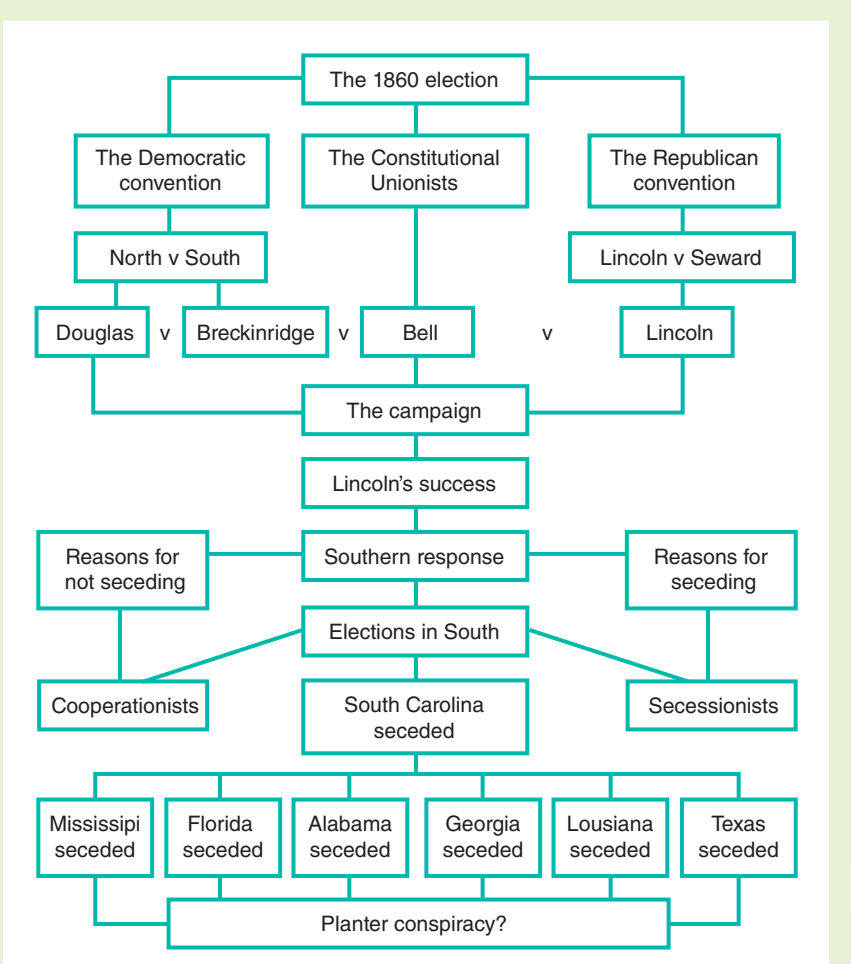
Upper South states had:

- a smaller stake in slavery than the lower South
- close ties with the North and thus more reason to fear the economic consequences of secession.

Nevertheless, many people in the upper South distrusted Lincoln. The legislatures of Virginia and Tennessee made it clear that they would oppose any attempt to force the seceding states back into the Union. If it came to the crunch, there would be many in the upper South who would put their Southern affiliations before their American loyalties.

TOK

In 1861, most Southerners believed they had every right to secede from the Union. How was this an ethically defensible position? (Ethics and Reason)



SUMMARY DIAGRAM

The 1860 election and secession

5 The outbreak of civil war

Key question: *Why was no compromise found to bring the seceded states back into the Union?*

KEY TERM

Border states The states between the North and the lower South, for example Kentucky, Maryland, Tennessee and Missouri. These states supported slavery but were not committed to secession.

Few Americans expected war in early 1861. Most Northerners believed that the seceded states were bluffing or thought that an extremist minority had seized power against the majority's wishes. Either way, the seceded states would soon be back in the Union: the Southern bluff would be called or the Unionist majority would assert itself. In contrast, most Southerners thought that the North would not fight to preserve the Union. **Border state** Americans were confident that a compromise could be arranged which would bring the seceded states back into the Union. These hopes were not realised. By April 1861 the United States were no longer united; they were at war. Was this the fault of blundering politicians? Or was the rift between North and South so great that war was inevitable?

How democratic was the establishment of the Confederacy?

The Confederacy

On 4 February 1861, 50 delegates of the seceded states met at Montgomery to launch the Confederate government.

- Chosen by the secession conventions, most of the delegates were lawyers or well-to do planters.
- Almost all had extensive political experience. Sixty per cent had been Democrats; 40 per cent were ex-Whigs.
- Almost half the delegates were cooperationists. Fire-eaters were distinctly under-represented.
- The delegates comprised a broad cross-section of the South's traditional political leadership.

The convention, desperate to win the support of the upper South, tried to project a moderate image. On 8 February it adopted a provisional constitution. The next day, sitting now as the Provisional Congress of the Confederate States, it set up a committee to draft a permanent constitution. This was approved in March and quickly ratified by all seven Confederate states. Closely modelled on the US Constitution, the main differences were features that more closely protected slavery and guaranteed state rights.

Jefferson Davis was appointed provisional President. He seemed a good appointment (see page 137). Educated at West Point, he had served with distinction in the Mexican War and had been a successful Secretary of War. Although a champion of Southern rights, he was by no means a fire-eater. Alexander Stephens from Georgia, a leading cooperationist, became Vice-President.

In his inaugural speech Davis asked only that the Confederacy be left alone. Although he expected the North to oppose secession, he was confident that the Confederacy would survive. His main concern was the fact that no states from the upper South had yet joined the Confederacy. The seven original Confederate states comprised only 10 per cent of the USA's population and had only 5 per cent of its industrial capacity.

The search for compromise

What compromise efforts were made in 1860–1?

Buchanan continued as president until March 1861. Blaming the Republicans for the crisis, his main concern was not to provoke war. He thus took no action as federal institutions across the South – forts, custom houses and post offices – were taken over by the Confederate states.

Buchanan has been criticised for not doing more to seek a compromise. In fairness, it is difficult to see what he could have done, given that Republicans did not trust him and the lower South was set upon leaving the Union.

Congressional efforts

Congress met in December 1860. Both the House and the Senate set up committees to explore plans of conciliation. The House Committee, with 33 members, proved to be too cumbersome. The Senate Committee of thirteen, on which Kentucky Unionist John Crittenden played a significant role, was more effective. It recommended a package of proposals that was known as the Crittenden Compromise:

- The Missouri Compromise line (see page 60) should be extended to the Pacific. Slavery would be recognised south of 36°30′ in all present territories, as well as those 'hereafter acquired'.
- A constitutional amendment would guarantee that there would be no interference with slavery in those states where it already existed.
- Congress would be forbidden to abolish slavery in Washington DC.

Republicans, whose strength in Congress had grown significantly as Southerners withdrew, rejected the proposals, which seemed to smack more of surrender than compromise.

The Virginia Peace Convention

In February 1861, a Peace Convention met in Washington, at the request of Virginia, to see if it could find measures that would bring the seceded states back into the Union. Attended by 133 delegates, it included some of the most famous names in US politics but no Confederate delegates. After three weeks' deliberation, the Convention supported proposals similar to those of Crittenden. These proposals were ignored by Congress and by the Confederacy. 'Given the momentum of secession and the fundamental set of Republicanism', observed David Potter, 'it is probably safe to say that compromise was impossible from the start.'

To what extent was Lincoln prepared to compromise?

Lincoln's actions in early 1861

Northern opinion

Up to 1860, slavery had been the main issue dividing North from South. That had now been replaced by secession. There were some, like newspaper editor Horace Greeley, who thought that the 'erring' Confederate states should be allowed to 'go in peace'. However, most Northerners were unwilling to accept the USA's dismemberment. The great experiment in self-government must not collapse. 'The doctrine of secession is anarchy', declared one Cincinnati newspaper. 'If the minority have the right to break up the Government at pleasure, because they have not had their way, there is an end of all government.'

Few Northerners, however, demanded the swift dispatch of troops to suppress the 'rebellion'. There was an appreciation that precipitous action might have a disastrous impact on the upper South. The best bet seemed to be to avoid provocation, hoping that the lower South would see sense and return to the Union.

Lincoln's views

Lincoln maintained a strict silence. However, in a letter written on 1 February 1861 to William Seward (soon to be his Secretary of State), he made it clear that he was ready to compromise with the South on a number of issues such as the Fugitive Slave law and slavery in Washington. He was even prepared to make some concessions with regard to New Mexico, given that the 1850 Compromise allowed settlers there to decide on the issue. However, Lincoln's general position with regard to slavery expansion was clear:

> *I say now … as I have all the while said, that on the territorial question – that is, the question of extending slavery under the national auspices – I am inflexible. I am for no compromise which assists or permits the extension of the institution on soil owned by the nation.*

Lincoln believed that he had won the 1860 election on principles fairly stated and was determined not to concede too much to the South. Like many Republicans, he exaggerated the strength of Union feeling in the South; he thought, mistakenly, that secession was a plot by a small group of planters. His hope that inactivity might allow Southern Unionists a chance to rally and overthrow the extremists was naïve. This probably made little difference. Even with hindsight, it is difficult to see what Lincoln could have done that would have changed matters.

Lincoln's cabinet

Lincoln's seven-man cabinet was more a cabinet of all factions than of all talents. Some of its members were radical, others conservative. Some represented the East, others the West. Some were ex-Whigs, others

ex-Democrats. Four had been competitors for the 1860 Republican nomination. Not one had been friendly with Lincoln pre-1861; he knew little about them and they knew even less about him:

- Seward became Secretary of State. He expected, and was expected, to be the power behind the throne.
- Salmon Chase, Secretary of the Treasury, was the main radical spokesman in the cabinet.
- Gideon Welles became Secretary of the Navy.
- The appointments of Caleb Smith as Secretary of the Interior and Simon Cameron as Secretary of War were seen as 'debt' appointments in return for support for Lincoln's presidential nomination.
- Attorney General Edward Bates and Postmaster General Montgomery Blair completed the cabinet.

Lincoln arrives in Washington

Lincoln set out from Springfield to Washington in February 1861. Instead of travelling directly to the capital, he stopped at various towns to make set speeches. This was probably a mistake: there was relatively little he thought he could say before his inauguration and thus he said little – to the disappointment of many who heard him.

Nearing Baltimore, Lincoln was warned of an assassination plot. Heeding the advice of his security advisers, he slipped into Washington 'like a thief in the night', according to his critics. This cast doubts about his courage to face the crisis ahead. In addition, neither his Western accent nor his social awkwardness inspired much confidence. The next few days were a nightmare for Lincoln as he met mobs of office seekers and endless delegations, as well as Congressmen and cabinet members.

Lincoln's inauguration

On 4 March 1861, Lincoln became president. His inaugural speech was conciliatory but firm. He said that he would not interfere with slavery where it already existed. Nor would he take immediate action to reclaim federal property or appoint federal officials in the South. However, he made it clear that, in his view, the Union was unbreakable and that secession was illegal. He thus intended to 'hold, occupy and possess' federal property within the seceded states. He ended by saying:

> *In your hands, my dissatisfied fellow countrymen, and not in mine, is the momentous issue of civil war. The government will not assail you. You can have no conflict without being yourselves the aggressors. You have no oath registered in heaven to destroy the government, while I shall have the most solemn one to 'preserve, protect, and defend' it … We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break, our bonds of affection.*

Most Republicans liked Lincoln's firm tone. Border state Unionists and many Northern Democrats approved of his attempts at conciliation. Unfortunately, the speech had no effect whatsoever on the Confederate states.

Did Lincoln deliberately manoeuvre the Confederacy into war?

War

The problem of Fort Sumter

Over the winter, the Confederacy had taken over most of the (virtually unmanned) forts in the South. There were two exceptions: Fort Pickens and Fort Sumter. Both forts were on islands. Pickens, off Pensacola, Florida, well out of range of shore batteries, could easily be reinforced by the federal navy. Sumter, in the middle of Charleston harbour, was a more serious problem. The Union garrison, numbering less than 100 men, was led by Major Robert Anderson, an ex-Kentucky slaveholder.

In January 1861, Buchanan sent a supply ship to Sumter. As it approached the fort, South Carolina batteries opened fire and its captain hastily retreated. Secessionists from other states, fearing that South Carolina's actions might provoke a conflict before the South was ready, warned the state to cool down. A truce (of sorts) was agreed. South Carolina would make no efforts to seize the fort and Buchanan would send no further aid.

By March 1861, Sumter had become the symbol of national sovereignty for both sides:

- If the Confederacy was to lay claim to the full rights of a sovereign nation it could hardly allow a 'foreign' fort in the middle of one of its main harbours.
- Lincoln had declared that he intended to hold on to what remained of federal property in the South. Retention of Sumter was thus a test of his credibility.

Lincoln's actions: March 1861

Lincoln had spoken as he did at his inauguration, believing that time was on his side. But within hours of his speech, he learned that the Sumter garrison would run out of food in six weeks. Lincoln sought the advice of his general-in-chief, 74-year-old Winfield Scott. Sumter's evacuation, Scott informed Lincoln, was 'almost inevitable': it could not be held without a large fleet and 25,000 soldiers, neither of which the USA possessed. On 15 March, Lincoln brought the matter before his cabinet. Most favoured withdrawal. Putting off making an immediate decision, Lincoln sent trusted observers to Charleston to assess the situation.

Seward was chief spokesman for the policy of masterly inactivity. If the upper South was not stampeded into joining the Confederacy by a coercive act, Seward argued, the 'rebel' states would eventually rejoin the Union. While Lincoln prevaricated, Seward, on his own initiative, sent assurances to Confederate leaders that Sumter would be abandoned.

At the end of March, following a report from Scott advising that both Sumter and Pickens should be abandoned, Lincoln called another cabinet meeting to discuss the crisis. By now, the fact-finding mission to Charleston had returned and reported finding no support for the Union whatsoever, quashing hopes that Union sentiment would prevail. Moreover, Northern newspapers were demanding that Sumter be held. Heedful of Northern opinion, most of the cabinet now favoured resupplying Sumter.

The decision to reprovision Sumter

Lincoln determined to send ships to reprovision both forts. Seward, who had thought Sumter's evacuation a foregone conclusion, now suggested that Lincoln should delegate power to him, evacuate Sumter, and provoke a war against France or Spain which might help to reunite the nation. Lincoln made it clear that he had no intention of delegating power, of abandoning Sumter or of fighting more than one war at a time.

On 4 April, Lincoln informed Anderson that a relief expedition would soon be coming and that he should try to hold out. Two days later he sent a letter to South Carolina's governor telling him that he intended to resupply Sumter. A small naval expedition finally left for Charleston on 9 April.

Rather than deliberately manoeuvring the Confederacy into firing the first shots, Lincoln was simply trying to keep as many options open as possible. He hoped to preserve peace, but was willing to risk, and possibly expected, war. By attempting to resupply Sumter, he was passing the buck to Jefferson Davis. The Confederate leader had to decide what to do next. If he gave the order to fire on unarmed boats carrying food for hungry men, this was likely to unite Northern opinion and possibly keep the upper South loyal.

On 9 April, Davis's cabinet met. Most members thought the time had come to lance the Sumter boil. Moreover, a crisis might bring the upper South into the Confederacy. Thus Davis issued orders that Sumter must be taken before it was resupplied. General Beauregard, commander of Confederate forces in Charleston, was to demand that Anderson evacuate the fort. If Anderson refused, Beauregard's orders were to 'reduce' Sumter.

The first shots of the war

On 11 April, Beauregard demanded Sumter's surrender. Anderson, who had once been Beauregard's tutor at West Point, refused. Negotiations dragged on for several hours but got nowhere. Finally, at 4.30 a.m. on 12 April, Confederate guns opened fire. Over the next 33 hours, Confederate and Sumter batteries exchanged some 5,000 rounds of artillery fire. Extraordinarily there were no deaths. On 13 April, with fires raging through the fort, Anderson surrendered. His troops were allowed to march out and were evacuated to Washington.

The attack on Sumter electrified the North. In New York, a city which had previously tended to be pro-Southern, 250,000 people turned out for a



Fort Sumter immediately after its surrender. Note the Confederate 'stars and bars', flying from the makeshift flagpole.

KEY TERM

Call to Arms
A presidential order calling up troops.

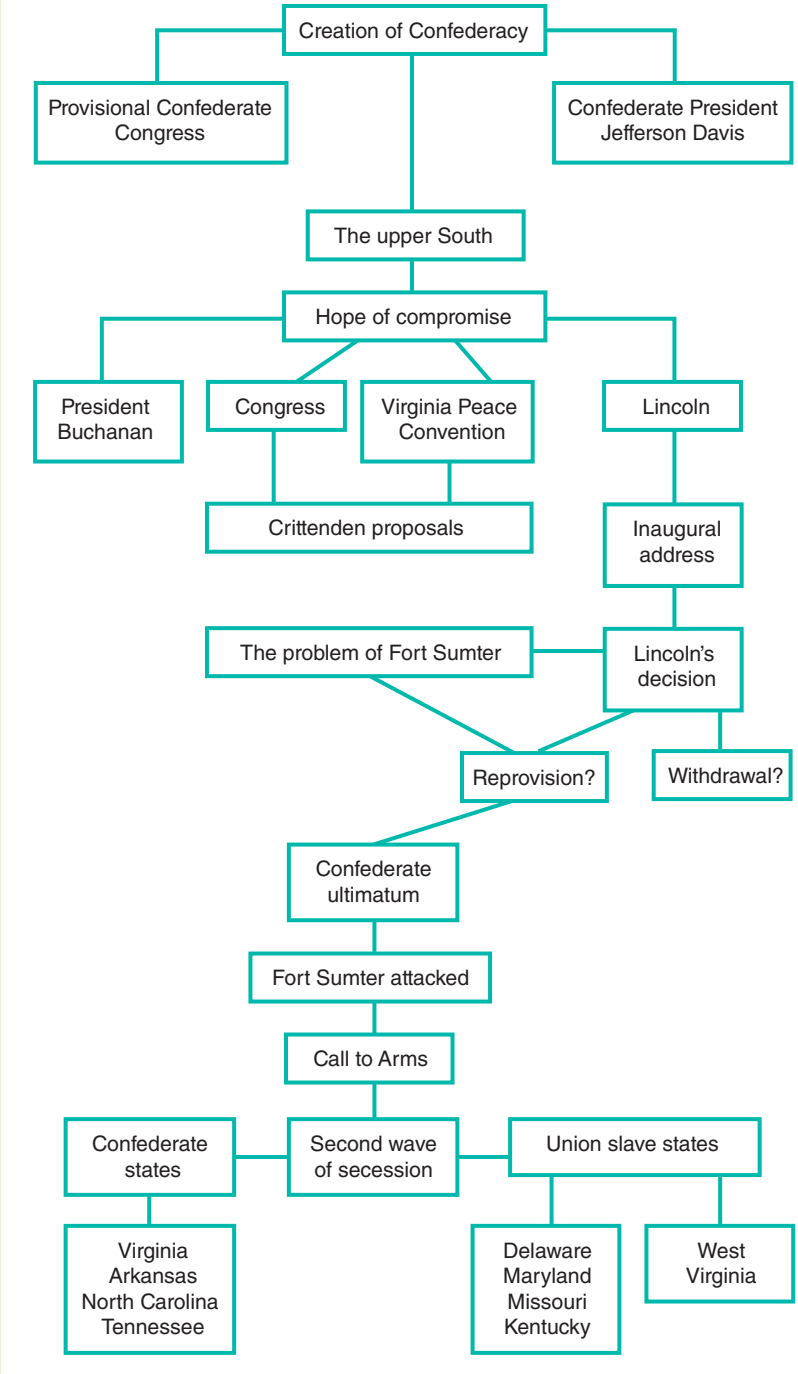
Union rally. 'There can be no neutrals in this war, only patriots – or traitors', thundered Senator Douglas. On 15 April, Lincoln issued a **Call to Arms**. Lincoln asked for 75,000 men for 90 days to put down the 'rebellion'.

Secession: the second wave

The upper South states now had to commit themselves. Virginia's decision was crucial. Its industrial capacity was as great as the seven original Confederate states combined. If it opted to remain in the Union, the Confederacy was unlikely to survive for long. However, most Virginians sympathised with the Confederacy. A state convention voted by 88 votes to 55 to support its Southern 'brothers'. A referendum in May ratified this decision, with Virginians voting by 128,884 to 32,134 to secede. Richmond, Virginia's capital, now became the Confederate capital. In May, Arkansas and North Carolina joined the Confederacy. In June, Tennessee voted by 104,913 to 47,238 to secede.

However, upper South support for the Confederacy was far from total:

- West Virginia seceded from Virginia and remained in the Union.
- East Tennessee was pro-Unionist.
- Four slave states – Delaware, Maryland, Missouri and Kentucky – did not secede.



SUMMARY DIAGRAM

The outbreak of civil war

6 Key debate

Key question: *Why did civil war break out in 1861?*

In March 1865, Lincoln, in his second inaugural address, presented a succinct explanation of how and why the war came:

> *One eighth of the whole population was coloured slaves, not distributed generally over the Union, but localised in the southern part of it. These slaves constituted a peculiar and powerful interest. All knew that this interest was somehow the cause of the war. To strengthen, perpetuate, and extend this interest was the object for which the insurgents would rend the Union even by war, while the Government claimed no right to do more than to restrict the territorial enlargement of it.*

Jefferson Davis saw things differently. He insisted in his memoirs that the Southern states had fought solely:

> *for the defence of an inherent, unalienable right … to withdraw from a Union which they had, as sovereign communities, voluntarily entered … The existence of African servitude was in no way the cause of the conflict, but only an incident. In the latter controversies that arose, however, its effect in operating as a lever upon the passions, prejudices, or sympathies of mankind, was so potent that it has been spread like a thick cloud over the whole horizon of historic truth.*

This explanation was accepted by many Southerners who continued to view the conflict as a war of Northern aggression.

The progressive interpretation

In the 1920s, 'progressive' historians, convinced that clashes between interest groups underpinned most events in history, claimed that the war was a contest between plantation agriculture and industrialising capitalism. According to progressives, economic issues (such as the tariff) were what really divided the power-brokers – Northern manufacturers and Southern planters.

The revisionist interpretation

By the 1940s, revisionist historians denied that sectional conflicts, whether over slavery, state rights, or industry versus agriculture, were genuinely divisive. The differences between North and South, wrote Avery Craven, were 'no greater than those existing at different times between East and West'. In the revisionist view, far more united than divided the two sections: sectional quarrels could and should have been accommodated peacefully. Far from being irrepressible, the war was brought on by extremists on both sides – rabble-rousing abolitionists and fire-eaters. The passions they aroused got out of hand because politicians, lacking the skill of previous generations, failed to find a compromise.

The importance of slavery

Historians have now come full circle. The states' rights, progressive and revisionist schools are currently dormant if not dead. Lincoln's view that slavery was 'somehow' the cause of the war is generally accepted. While the Confederacy might claim its justification to be the protection of states' rights, in truth, it was one right – the right to preserve slavery – that impelled the Confederate states' separation. Slavery defined the South, permeating almost every aspect of its life. The market value of the South's 4 million slaves in 1860 was $3 billion – more than the value of land and cotton. Slavery, moreover, was more than an economic system. It was a means of maintaining racial control.

The rise of abolitionism increased North–South tension. Although abolitionists did not get far with their message of racial equality, the belief that slavery was unjust and obsolete entered mainstream Northern politics. Convinced that a Slave Power conspiracy was at work, Northerners came to support a Republican Party pledged to stop slavery expansion. For many Southerners the election of Lincoln was the last straw – an affront to their honour and a threat to their peculiar institution.

In 1861, most Northerners fought to save the Union, not to end slavery. Confederate states fought to create a new nation. Thus nationalism became the central issue. But pre-1860 Southerners saw themselves as loyal Americans. The Civil War did more to produce Southern nationalism than Southern nationalism did to produce war. In so far as there was a sense of Southern-ness in 1861, it had arisen because of slavery.

Who was to blame?

With hindsight, Southerners got things wrong. Slavery was not in immediate peril in 1860–1. There was little that Lincoln could do to threaten it, even if he was so inclined. In fact, he was prepared to make some concessions to the South. From November 1860 to April 1861 he acted reasonably and rationally.

The same cannot be said for Southerners and their leaders. The South did not have to secede. The maintenance of slavery did not require the creation of a Southern nation. For much of the ante-bellum period most Southerners regarded the fire-eaters as quasi-lunatics. In the emotionally charged atmosphere of 1860–1, lunatic ideas – not so much the lunatics themselves – took over the South. Secession was a reckless decision. Some Southerners at the time realised that it would mean war – and that war would result in defeat and the end of slavery. The North, so much stronger in population and industry, was always likely to win. The fact that this was not obvious to most Southerners is symptomatic of the hysteria that swept the South in 1860–1. Southerners picked the quarrel. They fired the first shots. And they suffered the consequences.

TOK

The vast majority of documentation of the reasons for going to war have been a matter of public record for over 150 years. Why, then, are historians still arguing about the Union's reasons for going to war with the South? (History, Language, and Reason)

Chapter summary

The coming of war

By 1861, Northern and Southern states were at war. The peculiar institution of slavery was the main reason for this state of affairs. Slavery was the sole institution not shared by the two sections. It defined the South, permeating almost every aspect of its life. The rise of militant abolitionism in the North had exacerbated tension. But it was the issue of slavery expansion, rather than the mere existence of slavery, that polarised the nation. Most of the crises that threatened the bonds of the Union arose over this matter. Convinced that a Slave Power conspiracy was at work, Northerners came to support the Republican Party which was pledged to stop slavery expansion. For many Southerners the election of a Republican president in 1860 was the last straw – an affront to their honour. So the lower Southern states seceded (and formed the Confederacy). Lincoln did not accept that they could do so. All efforts at compromise failed. War came when Confederate guns opened fire on Fort Sumter in April 1861.

Examination advice

How to answer 'explain' questions

For questions that use the command term explain, you are asked to describe clearly reasons for an event, a development or a process. Each of these reasons will need to be explored fully. This means you should include evidence which supports your choice of reasons. It is best to put these explanations in order of importance.

Example

Explain the reasons for Southern secession.

1 For this question, you will need to discuss the various reasons the South broke away from the Union. These should be ranked according to which ones you think were the most important. There is no one correct answer here but you do need to prove your ideas by providing ample supporting evidence. If you choose to discount certain arguments, be sure to explain why these were of minor or no importance.

2 Before writing the answer you should write out an outline – allow around five minutes to do this. In your outline, you should list the reasons for Southern secession you want to cover in your answer. An example of an outline is given below. In this chapter you should be able to locate many facts to support each of these.

- *Election of Abraham Lincoln.*
- *Southern fears of a Republican administration.*
- *State and US constitutional rights.*

- *The desire to preserve an economic system.*
- *The desire to preserve a way of life and culture.*
- *The problems associated with Southern political power in an increasingly anti-slavery North.*

3 Your introduction you should briefly suggest various reasons for Southern secession. These might include political and social reasons. A possible introduction might look something like this:

When Abraham Lincoln was elected president in 1860, the Southern slaveholding states responded negatively. South Carolina took the lead and seceded from the Union shortly thereafter. Other states soon followed suit. Exactly why these states decided to break away from the Union remains controversial. Among the possible reasons were the desire to preserve a way of life and an economic system that some felt was under threat, the idea that because states had joined the Union willingly they should be able to leave this association if they so desired, and a political balance of power that increasingly favoured the North over the South. However, many Southerners did not wish to break away from the United States. Indeed, a number of slaveholding states remained in the Union once war did break out in 1861.

4 In your essay, clearly explain the importance of each of the reasons you have chosen. As in all essays, tie your paragraphs into question asked, in this case the 'reasons for Southern secession.' You can also reference earlier disputes such as the Nullification Crisis to support your argument about states' rights. Remember that structure in all your essays is important so fully explain each reason in a separate paragraph. An example paragraph is given below.

One of the major reasons for the Southern secession was the election of Abraham Lincoln in November 1860. His victory in the polls seemed to confirm Southerners' worst, if misguided, fears that a rabid anti-abolitionist was now leader of the nation. To many in the South, Lincoln as president represented a threat to the very heart of their peculiar institution. To them, slavery would first be curtailed and then eventually abolished as more free states were admitted into the Union. While South Carolina was the first to vote to break away, other slave states soon followed. This course of action was not without

debate. Some Southerners thought cooperation would be a better plan. In the end, the results in state by state elections were close. Slaveholding states or border states such as Maryland chose to remain in the US.

5 In your conclusion you need to tie together the various threads of the reasons the South seceded. A possible conclusion might read something like this:

While the reasons for the South's secession from the United States were multiple, it seems clear that chief among these were the desire to maintain an economic system based on forced labour. Anything less would have represented a threat to a way of life that had existed for more than two hundred years. Southern resistance to any change in the status quo and fears that a way of life was threatened were the primary motivations for secession.



Examination practice

Below are two exam-style questions for you to practise on this topic.

1 Explain why and how the Kansas–Nebraska Act created further tensions instead of resolving problems.

2 Evaluate the political impact of Lincoln's victory in the 1860 presidential elections.
(For guidance on how to answer 'evaluate' questions, see page 79.)

CHAPTER 6

Union versus Confederacy: the war 1861–5

Given its manpower and industrial strength, the Union was favourite to win a war of attrition. Ironically, however, a long, drawn-out war was perhaps the Confederacy's best chance of success. If it could wear down the Union's will to fight, it might achieve independence. As in any conflict, leadership – political and military – was vital. Leading politicians, particularly Lincoln and Davis, needed to delegate effectively, to make crucial decisions and to do their best to maintain morale. Military leaders needed to win battles. This chapter will examine the nature of the conflict and the ability of leaders on both sides by examining the following key questions:

- What were the main Union and Confederate strengths and weaknesses?
- Was the Civil War a war fought between 'armed mobs'?
- How effectively did the Confederacy fight the war?
- How effectively did the Union fight the war?
- How well did Union and Confederate generals lead their armies in the war?

1 Union and Confederate strengths

Key question: What were the main Union and Confederate strengths and weaknesses?

The war lasted for four years largely because both sides had strengths which offset those of the other.

Union advantages

What were the main Union strengths?

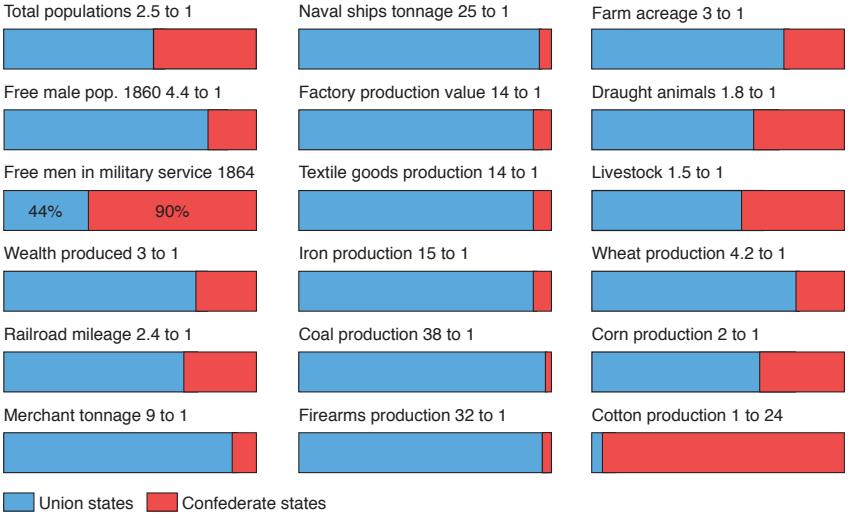
French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte thought most wars were won by the side with the 'big battalions' – that is, the side with most men and materials. The Union had the 'big battalions':

- There were 22 million people in the North compared with only 9 million in the South (of whom only 5.5 million were whites).
- Four slave states, containing some 2 million people, remained loyal to the Union (see page 112). These states would have added 45 per cent to the Confederacy's white population and 80 per cent to its industrial capacity.

- The Union had a stronger pool of military experience. Most men in the US regular army remained loyal to the Union. Between 1820 and 1860, two-thirds of all the graduates at West Point had been Northerners.
- The Union enjoyed a huge naval supremacy (see pages 127–9).
- In 1860, the North had six times as many factories as the South, ten times its industrial productive capacity, and twice as many miles of railway track (see Source A). In 1860, Northern states produced 97 per cent of the USA's firearms, 93 per cent of its cloth and 94 per cent of its pig iron.
- The North had more horses, cows and sheep and produced over 80 per cent of the country's wheat and oats.
- Not all the people within the Confederacy were committed to its cause. Pockets of Unionism existed, especially in the Appalachian Mountains. The Confederacy suffered a major setback when West Virginia seceded from Virginia.

SOURCE A

Comparative resources of Union and Confederate states.



? Given the comparative resources shown in Source A, did the Confederacy have any hope of victory?

Union slave states

Delaware

There was never any likelihood that Delaware would secede. Less than 2 per cent of its population were slaves and its economic ties were with the North.

Maryland

In April 1861, Union soldiers passing through Baltimore on their way to Washington were attacked by pro-Confederate townspeople. Four soldiers and twelve civilians were killed – the first fatalities of the war. Helped by the pro-Union Maryland governor, Lincoln took strong action. Stretching the Constitution to its limits (and probably beyond), he sent in troops and

suspended the **writ of habeas corpus** (allowing the arrest of suspected trouble-makers). Lincoln's tough measures helped to save Maryland for the Union. Elections in June were won by Unionist candidates and the state legislature voted against secession.

KEY TERM

Writ of habeas corpus
The right of a person to know why he or she has been arrested.

Kentucky

Kentucky was deeply divided. Its governor leaned to the South but its legislature was opposed to secession. Attempting to remain neutral, Kentucky rejected calls for recruits from both sides and warned Lincoln and Davis to keep out of the state. Lincoln, aware that a false move on his part could drive Kentucky into the Confederacy, relied on backstage manoeuvring rather than direct action. While paying (apparent) respect to Kentucky's integrity, his government supplied arms to Unionists within the state. Kentucky's neutrality was short-lived. In September 1861, Confederate forces occupied Columbus. Union forces were then ordered into Kentucky and soon controlled most of the state.

Missouri

In 1861, it seemed likely that Missouri would join the Confederacy. Its pro-Confederate governor called for 50,000 volunteers to defend the state against Union invasion. However, there was also considerable Unionist support, especially from the state's German population. Congressman Francis Blair and Captain Nathaniel Lyon helped to ensure that Missouri did not fall into Confederate hands. Although Lyon was defeated and killed at the battle of Wilson's Creek in August, Unionists kept control of most of the state.

Confederate advantages

What were the main Confederate strengths?

Although the odds were stacked heavily against the South, most Southerners, and many European observers, were confident that the Confederacy would triumph. The outcome of the American War of Independence and the Texan–Mexican war (see page 60) suggested that a determined 'David' could defeat 'Goliath'. Even after the war, many Southerners were convinced that the Confederacy should have won. 'No people ever warred for independence', said General Beauregard, 'with more relative advantages than the Confederacy.'

- The sheer size of the Confederacy – 750,000 square miles – was its greatest asset. It would be difficult to blockade and conquer. Even if Union armies succeeded in occupying Confederate territory, they would have difficulty holding down a resentful population.
- Confederate forces did not have to invade the North or capture Washington and New York to win. All they had to do was defend. Defence is usually an easier option in war than attack. The Union had little option but to attack.

- Southerners hoped that Northern opinion might come to question high losses. If Union will collapsed, the Confederacy would win by default.
- The crucial theatre of the war was the land between Washington DC and Richmond in North Virginia. Here, a series of west-to-east-running rivers provided a useful barrier to Union armies intent on capturing Richmond (see map on page 167). The orientation of the Shenandoah Valley, which ran from north-east (near Washington DC) to south-west (away from Richmond), also favoured the Confederacy.
- Although slaves were a potential threat, slavery proved itself a real benefit to the Confederacy. Slaves could be left to work on the home front, enabling the South to raise more of its white manpower than the Union. Although the Confederacy did not allow slaves to fight, they nevertheless performed many invaluable military tasks such as transporting goods to the front and building fortifications.
- Given that most of the war was fought in the South, Southerners were defending their own land and homes – a fact that encouraged them to fight harder than Northerners.
- Morale, commitment and enthusiasm were high in the South in 1861. Few Southerners questioned the rightness of the Confederate cause. Southern Churches assured Southerners that they had God on their side.
- Southerners were confident that they were far better soldiers than Northerners. The pre-war South had placed more emphasis on martial virtues than the North. In 1860, most of the USA's military colleges were in slave states. Southerners had usually dominated the senior posts in the US army. The elite of the nation's generals had all been Southerners. Most military experts assumed that farmers, who knew how to ride and shoot, were better soldiers than industrial workers.
- The Confederacy had the advantage of interior lines of communication. By using its road and rail systems, it could move its forces quickly from one area to another. This meant that it should be able to concentrate its forces against dispersed Union forces.
- Although Maryland, Missouri and Kentucky did not secede, thousands of pro-Confederates in the three states fought for the South.
- Cotton was the Confederacy's great economic weapon. Cotton sales would enable it to buy military supplies from Europe. Southerners also hoped that Britain might break the Union naval blockade to ensure that cotton supplies got through to its textile mills. This would lead to war between Britain and the Union.

Union advantages
- Population
- Industry
- Railways
- Navy
- Slaves
- Border states:
  - Delaware
  - Maryland
  - Missouri
  - Kentucky
  - West Virginia

Confederate advantages
- Size
- Defending
- Geographical
- Slavery
- Psychological
- Military morale
- Interior lines of communication
- Cotton

SUMMARY DIAGRAM

Union and Confederate strengths

2 The nature of the war

Key question: Was the Civil War a war fought between 'armed mobs'?

War on land

What were the main features of the land war?

The lack of preparation

Neither side was prepared for war in 1861. The Union had only a 16,000-strong regular army, most of which was scattered out West. The War Department totalled only 90 men. President Lincoln had no military experience. General Scott, the leading Union general, suffered from dropsy and vertigo. He had no general staff, no carefully prepared strategic plans and no programme for **mobilisation**. In April 1861, Lincoln appealed for 75,000 volunteers to serve for three months. It soon became obvious that this was insufficient. In July, Congress agreed to raise 500,000 men who would serve for three years.

KEY TERM

Mobilisation The business of preparing a country for war, for example, calling up troops and supplying them with weapons and training.

The Confederacy had to start its military organisation from scratch. President Davis at least had some military experience. The 300 officers who resigned from the regular army to fight for the Confederacy provided a useful pool of talent. Southern state militias were, on balance, better prepared for war than those in the North. In February 1861, the Confederate Congress had agreed to raise 100,000 volunteers for up to a year's service. In May, it authorised an additional 400,000 troops for three years' service. Given its limited manufacturing capacity, the South's main problem was equipping the volunteers. In April, it was estimated that there were only 160,000 muskets in the whole of the South.

'Armed mobs'?

Helmuth von Moltke, the Prussian Chief of Staff in the 1860s and 1870s, characterised the military operations of the Civil War as merely, 'Two armed mobs chasing each other around the country, from which nothing could be learned.' There was some justification for this view in 1861. Compared with European armies, both the Union and Confederate armies were amateurish – from the top down.

- Neither side had a recognisable high command structure.
- Taking whatever advice seemed appropriate, both Lincoln and Davis had the job of appointing the chief officers. Political criteria, not just military concerns, played a role in these appointments. While some 'political' generals became first-rate soldiers, many were incompetent.
- Only a few junior officers had any military qualifications. Many were elected by the men under their command or were appointed by state governors, usually because of their social standing or political influence.
- Most ordinary soldiers, unused to military discipline, had little time for army spit and polish. There was thus widespread insubordination.
- From Lincoln and Davis's point of view, the main requirement in 1861 was to raise men quickly. Accepting locally and privately raised volunteer units met those needs much more rapidly than recruiting regular troops.

Conscription

In 1861, the problem was not for authorities to obtain men but to hold volunteers to manageable numbers.

However, by early 1862 the flood of recruits had become a trickle. In March 1862 Davis had little option but to introduce conscription. Every white male, aged 18 to 35 (soon raised to 45), was liable for military service. The length of service of those already in the army was extended to the duration of the war.

In the North most states adopted a carrot and stick approach. The carrot was bounties – large sums of money offered to men who enlisted. The stick, initially, was the Militia Law (July 1862). This empowered Lincoln to call state militias into Union service. Most states managed to enrol enough men but some had to introduce a **militia draft** to fill their quotas. In March 1863, the Union introduced conscription for all able-bodied men aged 20 to 45. Rich men were able to evade military service by hiring a substitute or paying a commutation fee of $300 which exempted them from one draft but not necessarily the next one.

KEY TERM

Militia draft Conscription of men in the state militias.

Under one-tenth of the men who fought in the Civil War were conscripted. But this statistic does not reflect the full effect of the Conscription Laws. The fact that conscripts were treated with contempt by veteran soldiers and had no choice in which regiment they served encouraged men to volunteer.

Both sides raised massive armies. By 1865, some 900,000 men had fought for the Confederacy; the Union enlisted about 2.1 million men.

The impact of the rifle-musket

Improvements in military technology changed the nature of warfare. In previous wars the smoothbore musket, which had an effective range of less than 100 yards, had been the main infantry weapon. Given the musket's range, infantry charges could often overwhelm an enemy position, as US troops had shown in the Mexican War. However, by 1861 the smoothbore had been supplanted by the rifle-musket.

Rifling itself was not new, but loading rifled weapons prior to 1855 was a slow process. With the adoption of the **minié ball**, the rifle-musket could be fired as quickly as the smoothbore. Rifle-muskets were still **muzzle-loading** and single-shot (most men could fire three shots a minute) but the important fact was that they were accurate at up to 600 yards. This was to have a huge impact on the battlefield.

In 1861–2, Union **Ordnance Chief** James Ripley opposed the introduction of repeating rifles on the grounds that soldiers might waste ammunition, which was in short supply. In 1864–5, repeating rifles, used mainly by cavalry units, gave Union armies an important advantage. If Ripley had contracted for repeating rifles earlier, the war might have ended sooner.

KEY TERM

Minié ball An inch-long lead ball that expanded into the groove of the rifle-musket's barrel.

Muzzle-loading Loaded down the barrel.

Ordnance Chief The person who led the department responsible for the deployment and distribution of weapons and munitions.

Battle: attack and defence

In 1861–2, with smoothbore muskets still the norm, troops tended to attack in mass formations. Once the rifle-musket became commonplace the defending force had a great advantage, especially if it had some protection. By 1864, virtually every position was entrenched. Given that frontal assaults tended to result in appalling casualties, commanders usually tried to turn the enemy's flank. The defenders' response was to keep the flanks well guarded. Thus, frontal charges were often inevitable if there was to be any battle at all.

In large-scale battles, attacking infantry usually approached the enemy in lines of two ranks, each perhaps 1,000 men long. A second line followed about 250 yards behind the first. A third line was often held in reserve. The attack usually broke down into an 'advance by rushes', men of the first line working forward, from one bit of cover to the next, with pauses to build up enough fire to cover the next rush. If the first line stalled, the second line would be fed in to restore the attack's momentum, followed, if necessary, by the third line. The assaulting force, at the moment of collision with the enemy, would thus often consist of one disordered mass with units intermixed. It was difficult for officers to retain control and follow up any success that might be achieved.

Battles usually disintegrated into a series of engagements during which infantry traded volleys, charged and counter-charged. Most battles were hammering matches, not because of the stupidity of the commanders, but simply because of the nature of the combat. (In May 1864 some 19 million bullets were fired in a single week in North Virginia.) Both sides invariably sustained heavy losses. This made it difficult for the successful army to follow

up its victory. Usually the beaten army retreated a few miles to lick its wounds; the winners stayed in place to lick theirs.

Politicians on both sides often denounced their generals for not pursuing a beaten foe – not understanding how difficult it was for a victorious army to gather supply trains and exhausted soldiers for a new attack.

Cavalry

The accuracy of rifle-fire meant that cavalry charges against unbroken infantry were suicidal. The main role of cavalry was to scout, make raids against supply lines, guard an army's flanks, screen its movements, obtain supplies and cover retreats. In battle cavalrymen often dismounted and fought as infantry rather than charging with sabres. About 20 per cent of Confederate troops and 15 per cent of Union troops were cavalry.

At the start of the war Confederate cavalry were superior to those of the Union. This was partly the result of good morale and excellent leaders like Jeb Stuart and Nathan Bedford Forrest. Confederate superiority was also helped by the fact that cavalry units were organised into one autonomous unit, rather than being attached piecemeal to infantry regiments as was the case in the Union army until 1863. By 1863, Union cavalry were as good as Confederate cavalry and thereafter probably better, as they were better armed and had better horses.

Artillery

The rifle-musket forced artillerymen to retire to safer, but less effective, ranges. The terrain over which much of the war was fought did not help the artillery. Rugged country and extensive forests ensured that few battlefields offered large areas of open ground where guns could be used to maximum effect. Union armies almost always had greater artillery strength than **rebel armies**. The North had the manufacturing potential to produce more – and better – guns. Rebel artillery units possessed a patchwork of widely different guns. Some were manufactured in the Confederacy, some purchased abroad and others captured from Union armies.

KEY TERM

Rebel armies Confederates were called rebels or 'rebs' by Union forces.

Communications

Strategy and tactics were affected by improvements in communication:

- Both sides used railroads to move men and to keep them supplied. The North had a much more extensive railroad system than the South.
- On the Mississippi River and its tributaries, steamboats played a vital role.
- The telegraph enabled commanders to communicate directly with units on widely separated fronts, thus ensuring co-ordinated movement.

The war's main theatres

- The Confederate capital Richmond, the principal target of Union forces, was only 100 miles from Washington. The area north of Richmond was thus to be the scene of bitter fighting. In North Virginia, a flat coastal strip gave way to rolling hills and then to the Appalachian Mountains.

- Between the Appalachians and the Mississippi lay a vast region of plains and hills, extending from Kentucky and Tennessee in the north to the Gulf Coast in the south. The sheer size of the West, its lack of natural lines of defence, and the fact that the main rivers flowed into the heart of the Confederacy meant that the West was the rebels' 'soft underbelly'.
- West of the Mississippi was a huge but thinly populated area. The fighting here was small scale; none of the campaigns had a major effect on the war's outcome.
- There was a **guerrilla** dimension to the war, especially in Missouri, Kentucky, Arkansas and Tennessee.

The naval war

What were the main features of the naval war?

In April 1861, the Union, on paper, had a fleet of 90 ships but few were ready for action. There were only 8,800 men in the navy. However, the Union did have a large **merchant marine**, from which it could draw vessels and men. The Confederacy had no navy at all in 1861. Although some 300 naval officers joined the Confederacy, the likelihood of their finding ships to command seemed minimal. Nearly all US shipbuilding capacity was in the North.

As soon as the war began the North bought scores of merchant ships, armed them and sent them to do blockade duty. By December 1861, the Union had over 260 warships and 100 more were under construction. Much of this expansion was due to the dynamism of Navy Secretary Gideon Welles and Assistant Secretary Gustavus Fox.

Blockading the South was crucial. If the Confederacy could sell its cotton in Europe and purchase weapons and manufactured goods in return, the war might continue indefinitely. Given the 3,500 miles of Southern coastline, the blockade was easier to declare than to enforce. But as the months went by the blockade grew tighter, hindering the Confederacy's war effort.

The Union was also able to use its naval supremacy to transport its troops and to strike at Confederate coastal targets. In April 1862, New Orleans, the Confederacy's largest town, was captured by Admiral Farragut.

Secretary of the Confederate Navy Stephen Mallory had to create a navy from scratch. Appreciating that the Confederacy could never out-build the Union, he realised that its only hope was the bold adoption of new weapons. Aware of British and French experiments with **ironclad warships**, Mallory believed that the best chance to break the Union blockade was for the Confederacy to build several of these revolutionary vessels. In the summer of 1861 he ordered the conversion of the *Merrimack* (a scuttled Union frigate which the Confederacy had managed to raise) into an ironclad.

The Confederacy's greatest moment in the naval war came on 8 March 1862 when the *Merrimack* (renamed the *Virginia* and with its sides sheathed with iron plate) sank two blocking ships. For one day the Confederate navy

KEY TERM

Guerrilla war A type of warfare in which small bands of men, often not regular troops, harass enemy forces (for example, by attacking outposts, patrols and supply lines) and then return to homes and hideouts until called out to fight again.

Merchant marine Ships involved in trade, not war.

Ironclad warship A ship made of iron or protected by iron plates.



The naval war

ruled the waves. Unfortunately for Mallory, the Union had its own ironclad, the *Monitor*. On 9 March, the first ironclad encounter in history occurred. Neither the *Virginia* nor the *Monitor* was able to sink the other, but the *Virginia* was so damaged that it was forced to return to port and was later abandoned.

The Confederacy could scarcely retain a monopoly of new naval weapons. It had to stretch its resources to build one ironclad; the Union was able to mass-produce them.

The 'inland sea'

Confederate craft were no match for the heavily armed and armoured Union squadrons operating on the Western rivers. Gunboats helped Union troops to capture a number of key Confederate fortresses. By August 1862, Union forces controlled all the Mississippi except a 150-mile stretch from Vicksburg to Port Hudson.

Commerce raiders

The Confederacy purchased a number of fast raiders (such as the *Alabama*) from Britain. These raiders sank or captured some 200 Union merchant ships. Although never seriously threatening Union commerce, the raiders' exploits helped Southern morale. Unable to find safe ports for refitting, most were eventually hunted down and sunk.

A 'total' war?

Was the Civil War a total war?

Historian Mark Neely, Jr. has claimed that the war was not a **total war**. He stresses that the Union government never tried to control the North's economy or to mobilise all its resources. Moreover, there was little of the ruthlessness and cruelty that characterised twentieth-century wars. On the whole, civilians were safe. Women were rarely raped. The 'hard war' policies adopted by Union generals Sherman and Sheridan in 1864 (see pages 185–6) were designed to damage property, not kill.

However, as historian James McPherson has pointed out, 'The Civil War mobilised human resources on a scale unmatched by any other event in American history except, perhaps, World War II.' In fact, far more American men (proportionately) were mustered than in the Second World War. The Civil War was more total in the South than in the North. A quarter of white men of military age in the Confederacy lost their lives. Moreover, the Union eventually did all it could to destroy the South's economic resources.

KEY TERM

Total war A war in which both sides try to employ all their manpower and material resources to defeat the enemy, thus affecting the lives of virtually all citizens.

Johnny Reb Confederate soldiers' nickname.

Billy Yank Union soldiers' nickname.

The first modern war?

To what extent was the Civil War the first modern war?

Given railways, the telegraph, the rifle-musket and iron, steam-driven ships, many historians see the Civil War as more akin to the First World War (1914–18) than the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars (1792–1815).

However, there was no battle in the entire war when there were more than 100,000 men on each side. The strategy and tactics of the armies would have been familiar to Napoleon and British Admiral Nelson would have felt at home in most of the ships. Horse-drawn transport remained the norm. Experiments with machine guns, submarines and underwater mines were rudimentary and made little impact on the war's outcome. Given the state of communications, Civil War generals could barely command, still less control, their men on battlefields.

The war came half way between the Napoleonic Wars and the First World War. Not surprisingly it showed features of both.

The soldiers' experience

Did Union and Confederate soldiers have similar experiences of war?

Historian Bell Wiley believed that the similarities between '**Johnny Reb**' and '**Billy Yank**' far outweighed the differences. Nevertheless, he accepted that there were some differences. Some 20 per cent of Union troops had been born overseas, mainly in Ireland and Germany. By 1865, 10 per cent of Union

troops were African Americans. In contrast, 95 per cent of rebel soldiers were white native-born Southerners. According to Wiley, Union soldiers were better educated and held a less romantic view of the war. Southern troops were reputed to be more independent and less likely to take military discipline seriously.

Soldiers' commitment

Bell Wiley believed that most soldiers had little idea of what they were fighting for. Historian Reid Mitchell reached a similar conclusion: the soldiers 'may well have fought during the Civil War for reasons having less to do with ideology than with masculine identity'. Historian James McPherson disagrees. After examining a cross-section of letters, he claims that the majority of men on both sides were fully aware of the issues at stake and passionately concerned about them. Southerners believed that they were defending hearth and home against an invading army and saw the conflict as the second War for Independence. Northerners knew they were fighting to save the Union. Thus men on both sides were motivated by simple but very strong patriotism.

Military organisation

Military units usually consisted of men who came from the same neighbourhoods. The closeness of the soldiers to their home community was a powerful impetus for military service. Soldiers were aware that any cowardice or misdoing was reported home. So, too, was bravery.

Age, health and fitness

The average age of soldiers was 25. Eighty per cent of the men were between 18 and 30 years old, but drummer boys as young as nine signed on (the youngest boy killed in battle was twelve) and there were also soldiers over 60. Physical examinations of recruits were often a sham. This accounts for the fact that scores of women managed to enlist by passing as men.

Equipment

Union soldiers were better equipped than the rebels. By 1862, most Union infantry wore a blue uniform. Some Confederate soldiers wore grey. Others wore clothes they had stripped from the enemy dead and dyed butternut – a yellowish-brown colour.

Ordinary soldiers carried nearly everything they would need to fight the enemy and survive the elements. At the very least, a soldier bore a rifle, bayonet, cartridge box, haversack, cape, blanket and canteen. Many also carried a razor, towel, soap, comb, knife, writing implement, Bible, an oil-cloth groundsheet, socks, money, tobacco pouch, matches, a pipe, eating utensils and a cup.

Supplies

Union soldiers were better fed than Confederates. The only criticism that British observers could make of the Union army ration (which mainly

comprised salted meat and hard bread) was that there was too much of it. Supply problems meant that Southern troops often had to scavenge for whatever they could get.

Lack of romance

For most men the novelty of army life was short-lived. In its place came homesickness and sheer tedium. In the summer, soldiers suffered from heat and from the fact that they were constantly on the move. During the winter, tents, log huts or makeshift shanties were poor protection from the weather. Inattention to latrine procedures and garbage pits meant that there was usually an overbearing stench.

Recreation

In camp, and on the march, men sought to overcome the boredom of army routine. Music helped to sustain morale. Regimental bands welcomed recruits, provided entertainment in camp and inspired troops both on the march and in battle. Each side had its own favourite songs: Union troops liked 'Battle Cry of Freedom' and 'John Brown's Body'; Confederates liked 'Dixie' and the 'Bonnie Blue Flag'. Sports – boxing, wrestling and baseball – were popular. So was gambling. Soldiers often frequented brothels when they were on leave. Leave, however, was something of a rarity in both armies.

Battle

While actual fighting took up only a small part of a soldier's time, battle was often at the forefront of men's minds. Most soldiers, initially shocked by the smoke, crash of musketry and cannon-fire, fought well. Amazingly, men often begged for the privilege of carrying their regiment's colours, knowing full well that in battle colour-bearers were among the first to die.

Medical care

Some 360,000 Union soldiers died in the war. About 67,000 were killed in action, 43,000 died of wounds and 224,000 died of disease. (Another 24,000 died from unknown – or other – causes.) Confederate statistics (which are less accurate) indicate a comparable situation. Dysentery, typhoid, pneumonia and malaria were the main killers. While disease mortality was terribly high, far fewer soldiers died from disease than in the Napoleonic or **Crimean Wars**. Indeed, the US Surgeon General wrote that the Union army's death rate from disease was 'lower than has been observed in any army since the world began'. This was largely because, by the standards of the time, medical care was good.

Although neither side had adequate facilities in 1861, this was generally put right as the war progressed. Ambulance corps were established to give first aid on the battlefield and remove the wounded to dressing stations and field hospitals. Both sides constructed a network of hospitals of astonishing size (the Confederate Chimborazo Hospital could cope with 8,000 patients) and

KEY TERM

Crimean War In 1854, Britain and France went to war against Russia to protect Turkey. Most of the war, which lasted until 1856, was fought in the area of Russia known as the Crimea.

commendable efficiency. Soon over 3,200 women were working as nurses. (Previously army nursing had been an all-male concern.) Nurses such as Clara Barton won reputations akin to Florence Nightingale's in the Crimean War. The main problem was the state of knowledge of medicine and public health, rather than lack of competence on the part of army doctors and nurses.

SOURCE B

Confederate soldiers, killed at the Battle of Antietam (1862), lie along a dirt road.



? Was the photographer who took Source B most likely to have been a Northerner or Southerner? Explain your answer.

TOK Photography was a fairly new technology at the time of the Civil War. To what degree and in what ways might the addition of visual coverage of the conflict have affected people's understanding of the war? (Perception and Emotion)

Desertion

One in seven Confederate and one in ten Union troops deserted. They did so for a variety of reasons: boredom, fear, concern for families at home, and lack of commitment. The fact that the odds were in favour of the escape attempt succeeding also encouraged desertion. Union and Confederate authorities did their best to lure deserters back into the ranks with periodic amnesties. There was little consistency in the punishment meted out to deserters who were caught. Some were branded with the letter D for deserter; some were sentenced to hard labour; a few were shot.

Prisoners of war

Prisoner exchange was the norm in the first two years of the war. In 1863, the Union suspended exchange of prisoners, technically on the grounds of Confederate violations of agreements (particularly with regard to black prisoners), but actually because the smaller populated South had more to gain from exchanges. Thus, in 1863–4, both sides had to deal with thousands of captives. Warehouses, schools, even open fields, were used as prison camps. Most were over-crowded and prisoners had inadequate food, shelter,

clothing and medical services, resulting in high mortality rates. Union prisoners particularly suffered. This was more by accident than intent. By 1864, the Confederacy was having difficulty feeding its own people, never mind captured Yankees. The most notorious prison camp was Andersonville – the fourth biggest 'settlement' within the Confederacy by 1864. Over a quarter of the camp's 50,000 inmates died from malnutrition and disease. During the war, 194,743 Union soldiers were imprisoned. Some 30,128 died. Of the Confederates, 214,865 prisoners were taken; 25,976 died.

SOURCE C

Extracts from letters written by Tally Simpson of the 3rd South Carolina Volunteers during 1862. Simpson was a well-educated and thoughtful man who fought for the Confederacy in all the major engagements in the Virginia theatre from 1861 to 1863. Surprisingly, given that he was from a rich family (he took a slave with him to war), he never rose above the rank of corporal. (Tally Simpson was killed at the battle of Chickamauga in 1863, see page 179.)

Custis' Farm on the Peninsula, Va. April 24th 1862

Dear Sister

… We are still living in the open air without tents, but with little houses made of blankets, we make out very well. I am doing remarkably well with the small amount of clothing I have on hand. I am fearful about keeping myself shod. My boots are giving way, and there are no prospects for another pair … During our idle hours, we pass our times in reading, fishing and thinking of the women … Zion is in good health and spirits.

Camp Jackson, Va. Wednesday, June 18th 1862

Dear Sister

… The dull routine of camp life continues daily, and I am becoming entirely disgusted with anything that pertains to this form of life. Drill, drill, drill; work, work, work; and guard, guard, guard. Eat, e-a-t. Alas. Would that we had eating to do in proportion to work and drill. But nothing but bacon and bread, bread and bacon. Occasionally we get cowpeas which I consider a great luxury. We are all doing finely, but I have had a very severe cough for some time which of late has rather frightened me. Zion is well again and sends his love to Hester and his family and begs to be remembered to the white family.

Camp Near Martinsburg, Va. Sept 24th 1862

My very dear little Sis

… the sun shines beautifully. The soldiers are grouped around laughing and conversing gaily, some eating, others cooking, and many otherwise occupied. I however am differently inclined this afternoon and feel that a short confab with the darling ones at home sweet home will afford me ten thousand times more pleasure than the participation in any little scenes enacted in camp … Oh! Sister, how my heart is filled with gratitude to God for his mercy toward me and his

1 What does Source C suggest about a) the concerns and b) the convictions of Confederate soldiers?
2 Comment on the references to Zion in Source C.

kind protection of my life thus far. I feel that your prayers and my own have been heard and answered. I shall ever pray that I may continue in the path of righteousness, and that should I fall, it shall be in defence of a glorious cause with a sweet assurance of a home in Heaven.

Conclusion

The romantic assumptions of 1861 were soon shattered by the harsh reality of war. One in five of the soldiers who fought in the Civil War died in it. Yet most soldiers came to look back on the war with pride and nostalgia. Perhaps there was more reason for pride than nostalgia. The hard school of experience turned the enthusiastic mobs of 1861 into resilient soldiers whose powers of endurance astounded European observers.



SUMMARY DIAGRAM

The nature of the war

3 The Confederate war effort

Key question: How effectively did the Confederacy fight the war?

President Davis

How effective a leader was Jefferson Davis?

Davis remains a controversial figure. His Vice-President, Alexander Stephens, thought him, 'weak, timid, petulant, peevish, obstinate' and blamed him for practically everything that went wrong in the war. Historian David Potter saw Davis's performance as the most important reason why the Confederacy lost the war, claiming that if Davis and Lincoln had reversed roles, the Confederacy might have won.

The case against Davis

Davis certainly had his failings. One of these was his inability to establish good working relationships with many of his colleagues. He quarrelled with military commanders and leading politicians and found it hard to work with men who enjoyed less than his full approval. Perhaps the high turnover in his cabinet is proof of his inability to cement firm relationships. In the course of the war, he appointed no fewer than four Secretaries of State and six Secretaries of War.

Davis is also blamed for meddling in the affairs of subordinates. Finding it hard to prioritise and to delegate, he got bogged down in detail. Indecision is seen as another of his failings; lengthy cabinet meetings often came to no conclusion. While some contemporaries accused Davis of having despotic tendencies, historians have criticised him for exercising his powers too sparingly. He has also been blamed for failing to communicate effectively. At a time when the Confederacy needed revolutionary inspiration, he is seen as being too conservative.

The case for Davis

Davis did and does have his defenders. In 1861, unlike Lincoln, he came to the presidency with useful military and administrative experience: he had fought in the Mexican War and had been Secretary of War from 1853 to 1857. He had, from the outset, a more realistic view of the situation than most Southerners. General Robert E. Lee praised Davis and said he could think of no one who could have done a better job.

The fact that Davis appointed Lee says much for his military good sense. Despite later accusations, he did not over-command his forces. To generals he trusted, like Lee, he gave considerable freedom.

Davis supported tough measures when necessary, even when these ran contrary to concerns about states' rights and individual liberty. He promoted the 1862 Conscription Act, imposed **martial law** in areas threatened by

KEY TERM

Martial law The suspension of ordinary administration and policing and, in its place, the exercise of military authority.

KEY TERM

Impressment of supplies
Confiscation of goods.

Union invasion, supported the **impressment of supplies**, and urged high taxes on cotton and slaves.

As the war went on, he forced himself to become a more public figure, making several tours of the South to try to rekindle flagging faith. He probably did as much as anyone could to hold together the Confederacy. Few have questioned his dedication to the rebel cause or the intense work he put into a difficult job, the stress of which increasingly took its toll. Far from his performance contributing to Confederate defeat, it may be that his leadership ensured that the Confederacy held out for as long as it did.

How competent was Davis's cabinet?

Davis's cabinet

In all, Davis made sixteen appointments to head the six cabinet departments. Judah Benjamin accounted for three of these as he was appointed, in succession, to Justice, War and State. A brilliant lawyer (the first Jew to hold high political office in the USA), he owed his survival to his ability and to his close relationship with Davis; no other adviser had his ear so often or so influentially. Benjamin, Stephen Mallory (Navy) and John Reagan (Postmaster General) served in the cabinet from start to finish.

The high turnover in the War and State departments resulted not from feuds between Davis and his Secretaries, but from Congressional criticisms that sometimes forced Davis to accept resignations. Benjamin was usually prepared to take the blame for events, if by so doing he sheltered Davis. Davis's cabinet met frequently and deliberated for hours. He usually heeded the advice he was given. For the most part he left his Secretaries to get on with running their departments, involving himself only in the detailed decision making of the War Department.

Most of the Secretaries were capable men and government operations functioned reasonably smoothly for much of the war. The War Department, with over 57,000 civilian employees at its height, was easily the largest office. James Seddon, the longest serving War Secretary (November 1862–February 1865), was energetic and clear-thinking, as was his Assistant Secretary John Campbell.

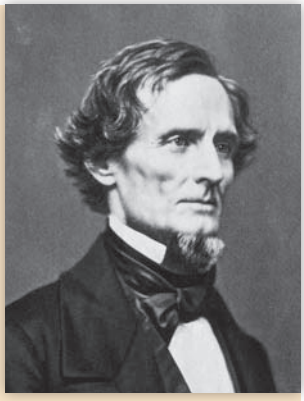
Did the Confederate Congress support Davis?

The Confederate Congress

Congressmen in the Provisional Congress (in 1861–2) were selected by their state legislatures. After this, there were two elected Congresses, the first from 1862 to 1864, the second from 1864 to 1865, each consisting of a House and Senate.

Of the 267 men who served as Confederate Congressmen, about a third had sat in the US Congress. There was no two-party system. Men who had once been political enemies tried to present a united front. It may be, however, that the absence of an 'official' opposition resulted in less channelling of political activity and more squabbling. Davis, moreover, had no party

Jefferson Davis, 1808–89



Jefferson Davis was born in Kentucky and raised in Mississippi. After being educated at West Point, he settled upon a military career and fought in the Black Hawk War of 1832. In 1835, shattered by the death of his first wife Sarah (Zachary Taylor's daughter who had married Davis against her father's wishes), he resigned his commission and sought seclusion at his Briarfield plantation at Davis Bend, Mississippi. In 1845 he married Varina Howell and was elected to Congress. The following year he resigned to serve in the Mexican War. Rising to the rank of colonel, he fought with distinction, helping to win the battle of Buena Vista.

As a US Senator (1847–51), he advocated the expansion of slavery. After an unsuccessful campaign for the governorship of Mississippi (1851), he served as Secretary of War (1853–7). He returned to the Senate in 1857, resigning when Mississippi seceded in 1861. He had hoped for a high military command in the Confederacy and was thus disappointed by his selection as president of the Confederate states.

He worked hard to establish and protect the new nation but his insistence on strong centralised power to conduct the Civil War alienated many states-rights Southerners. His detractors believe that his rigid personality and inability to build consensus amounted to a failure of leadership which contributed to the Confederacy's defeat. Fleeing Richmond in April 1865, he was captured in Georgia. Imprisoned for two years, he was never brought to trial.

He spent the years after the war writing his memoirs and trying to justify the course of secession and war.

How good a president was Davis?
Historians have had very different views.

Historian Bell Wiley:

'Davis neither realised the importance of cultivating good will nor was he willing to pay the price of being a popular leader.'

Historians David Donald, Jean Baker and Michael Holt:

'Much of the criticism of the Confederate president fails to take into account the insuperable difficulties of his position and to realize that no other Southern political leader even approached Davis in stature.'

Historian Steven Channing:

'Yet despite the criticisms and vituperations, Davis somehow gave the Confederacy a sense of identity and purpose. His 'energy, sagacity, and indomitable will', wrote a *New York Times* reporter who met him, 'was all that kept the Confederacy going'. He might be 'cold, reserved, imperious', but 'he could be the tool of no man: without him, the Rebellion would crumble to pieces in a day".'

organisation to mobilise support or to help him formulate legislative policy and guide bills through Congress.

The Confederate Congress often found itself on the horns of a dilemma. While wanting to pass measures that would ensure victory, it was aware of its 'sacred heritage' to preserve states' rights. These two principles often clashed.

In 1861–2, most Congressmen rallied round Davis. Accordingly, the administration's measures, even those seen as anti-states' rights, passed almost intact. However, as morale deteriorated under the impact of military setbacks, inflation and terrible casualty lists, opposition grew, both inside and outside Congress.

This was reflected in the 1863 Congressional elections. Almost 40 per cent of the members of the second Congress were new to that body and many were

opposed to Davis. His opponents defy easy categorisation. Some held extreme states' rights views; others simply disagreed with the way the war was being waged. A small minority wanted peace. Not surprisingly the 'opposition' never formed a cohesive voting bloc. Thus there was no major rift between Congress and Davis.

Did the Confederacy 'die of states' rights'?

States' rights

To wage a successful war, the Confederacy had to have the full co-operation of all its states. It also needed a central government strong enough to make the most of the South's resources. Some state leaders were not keen to concede too much power to Richmond. Appealing to the principle of states' rights (for which they had seceded), they resisted many of the efforts of Davis's administration to centralise the running of the war effort. Governors Joseph Brown of Georgia and Zebulon Vance of North Carolina are often blamed for not working for the common cause. Brown, for example, opposed conscription and exempted thousands of Georgians from the draft by enrolling them in bogus state militia units.

In reality, however, most state governments co-operated effectively with Davis. All the 28 men who served as state governors, including Brown and Vance, were committed to the Confederacy. As commanders-in-chief of their states, they had more power in war than in peace and were not averse to using this power. They initiated most of the necessary legislation at state level – **impressing** slaves and declaring martial law. As a result, they often found themselves vying more with their own state legislatures than with Richmond.

KEY TERM

Impressing Forcing into government service.

Did the Confederacy 'die of democracy'?

Confederate liberty and democracy

In 1862, Davis boasted that, in contrast to the Union, 'there has been no act on our part to impair personal liberty or the freedom of speech, of thought or of the press'. Protecting individual rights might seem an important aim (albeit an unusual one for a state whose cornerstone was slavery). However, historian David Donald claimed that concern for individual liberties cost the South the war. Unwilling to take tough action against internal dissent, Donald thought the Confederacy 'died of democracy'.

Donald's argument is not convincing. The notion that Davis could have created a government machine that could have suppressed civil liberties – and that if it had done so it might have triumphed – is nonsense. Davis, like most Southerners, was fighting for what he saw as traditional American values, which he could not easily abandon. Such action would have alienated the public whose support was essential.

Donald's supposition that the Confederacy allowed total individual freedom is also mistaken. In 1862, Congress authorised Davis to declare martial law in areas threatened by the enemy and, given the widespread opposition to conscription, allowed him to suspend the right of habeas corpus in order

that **draft evaders** might be apprehended. Nor was there total freedom of speech. Although there was no specific legislation, public pressures that had long stifled discussion about slavery succeeded in imposing loyalty to the Confederacy.

In short, it is unlikely that the preservation of basic freedoms, in so far as they were preserved, had more than a marginal impact on the Confederacy's demise.

Financing the war

How successfully did the Confederacy finance the war?

The Confederacy was always likely to find it difficult to finance a long war. It had few gold reserves and the Union blockade made it difficult to sell cotton and to raise money from tariffs. Taxes on income, profits and property, levied in 1863, were unpopular, difficult to administer and failed to bring in sufficient revenue. State governments, which raised the taxes, were often reluctant to send money to Richmond. Rather than tax their citizens, states often borrowed money or printed it in the form of state notes to pay their dues, thus worsening **inflationary pressures**.

SOURCE D

Extract from the *Richmond Dispatch* newspaper, July 1863, showing inflation in Richmond 1860–3

The Results of Extortion and Speculation – *The state of affairs brought about by the speculating and extortion practiced upon the public cannot be better illustrated than by the following grocery bill for one week for a small family, in which prices before the war and those of present are compared:*

1860		1863	
Bacon, 10lbs at 12½c	$1.25	Bacon, 10lbs at 1$	$10.00
Flour, 30lbs at 5c	1.50	Flour, 30lbs at 12½c	3.75
Sugar, 5lbs at 8c	.40	Sugar, 5lbs at $1.15	5.75
Coffee, 4lbs at 12½c	.50	Coffee, 4lbs at $5	20.00
Tea (green), ½lb at $1	.50	Tea (green), ½lb at $16	8.00
Lard, 4lbs at 12½c	.50	Lard, 4lbs at $1	4.00
Butter, 3lbs at 25c	.75	Butter, 3lbs at $1.75	5.25
Meal, 1pk at 25c	.25	Meal, 1pk at $1	1.00
Candles, 2lbs at 15c	.30	Candles, 2lbs at $1.25	2.50
Soap, 5lbs at 10c	.50	Soap, 5lbs at $1.10	5.50
Pepper and salt (about)	.10	Pepper and salt (about)	2.50
Total	$6.55	Total	$68.25

To what extent is Source D likely to be a reliable source of evidence for food prices in the Confederacy? ?

KEY TERM

Draft evaders Those who avoided conscription.

Inflationary pressure An increase in the quantity of money in circulation, resulting in a decline in its value.

In 1863, in an effort to feed Southern troops, Congress passed the Impressment Act, allowing the seizure of goods to support the armies at the front line, and the Taxation-in-kind Act, authorising government agents to collect 10 per cent of produce from all farmers. Davis accepted the unfairness of these measures but thought them justified by 'absolute necessity'. He may have been right. Taxation-in-kind did help to supply rebel armies during the last two years of the war.

Only 8 per cent of the Confederacy's income was derived from taxes. This meant it had to borrow. In February 1861, Congress allowed Treasury Secretary Christopher Memminger to raise $15 million in bonds and stock certificates. Guaranteed with cotton, there were initially many buyers, both within the Confederacy and abroad. But after 1863, when the tide of battle turned against the Confederacy, European financiers – and Southerners – were reluctant to risk loaning money to what seemed like a lost cause.

Given that the Confederacy was only able to raise one-third of its war costs through taxes, bonds and loans, Memminger had little option but to print vast amounts of Treasury paper money. Individual states, towns, banks and railway companies also issued paper notes. Thus by 1865 prices in the eastern Confederacy were over 5,000 times the 1861 levels. This led to widespread suffering. Memminger's efforts to slow down inflation proved inadequate. Attempts to fix prices, for example, encouraged hoarding, thus exacerbating shortages of vital produce.

Massive inflation and a spiralling debt forced Memminger to resign in 1864. His successor, George Trenholm, tried to reduce the amount of money in circulation but by 1864–5 the Confederacy was on its last legs and the financial situation desperate.

Given that inflation helped to erode Southern morale, Memminger has often been singled out for blame. In fairness, it is hard to see what else he could have done. Shortages of basic commodities, resulting from the breakdown of the railroad system and from the blockade, meant that inflation was inevitable.

How successful was the Confederate economy?

The economic impact of the war on the Confederacy

Efforts to manage the economy

In many respects, Davis's government acted forcefully to place the South's economy on a war footing and to expand its industrial base. Before the war, most Southerners took the view that economic development was beyond the proper scope of the central government's powers. But after 1861 officials intruded into almost every aspect of economic life as regulations abounded to manage conscription, manufacturing and transportation. The result was that the Richmond government played a much greater role in economic matters than Lincoln's government did in the North.

The **Ordnance Bureau**, ably led by Josiah Gorgas, a Northerner who stayed loyal to his Southern wife rather than to Pennsylvania, played a crucial role. By 1863, there were enough arsenals, factories and gunpowder works in the South to keep its armies supplied with the basic tools of war.

The War Department also assumed increasing control over the South's railway system:

- Companies were required to share spare parts and rolling stock.
- Railway schedules were regulated.
- **Draft exemptions** were issued to ensure that railway companies had skilled workers.

Blockade running

Steps were taken to regulate foreign trade. In 1863 a law required all **blockade-runners** to carry, as at least one-third of their cargo, cotton out and war supplies in. In 1864 the importation of luxury goods without a special permit was banned.

Blockade-running was remarkably successful. Hundreds of ships – some state-owned, some Confederate government-owned, but most owned by private individuals from the Confederacy and Britain (where most were built) – were involved. The most popular routes were from Nassau in the Bahamas to Charleston and from Bermuda to Wilmington, North Carolina. Given the advantage of surprise and speed, blockade-runners stood a 75 per cent chance of success – a success rate which continued until the last months of the war. Overall, the South imported 60 per cent of its small arms, 75 per cent of its **saltpetre** and nearly all its paper for making cartridges.

State governments

State governments played an important economic role. Most tried to regulate the distribution of scarce goods, such as salt. Successful efforts were also made to ensure that farmers shifted from cotton to food production. There was a reduction in the cotton crop, from over 4 million bales in 1861 to only 300,000 bales in 1864.

Confederate socialism

'**Confederate socialism**' should not be exaggerated. Short of trained personnel, Richmond was not up to the task of carrying out many of its ambitious schemes. In the final analysis, most of what was achieved was the result of private and local initiative, not Confederate order. Davis's government mainly confined its activities to the military sphere. Even here, private enterprise was crucial. The Tredegar Ironworks at Richmond, the South's main ordnance producer, remained in private control.

Confederate economic failure

The Confederate government could have done more to limit the war's economic effects:

KEY TERM

Ordnance Bureau The government agency responsible for acquiring war materials.

Draft exemptions Workers in key industries did not have to serve in the armed forces.

Blockade-runners Ships, mainly built in Britain (and manned mainly by British seamen), which tried to evade the Union warships blockading Southern ports in an effort to trade with the Confederacy.

Saltpetre Potassium nitrate – a vital ingredient of gunpowder.

Confederate socialism The Richmond government's attempts to control the Confederate economy.

- More could have been done to supervise the railroad system which, handicapped by shortages of materials and labour, slowly collapsed. Thus raw materials destined for factories and foodstuffs bound for armies were often left at depots for want of transport.
- Cotton might have been used to better effect, especially early in the war. The embargo on cotton exports (see page 191), supported if not officially sanctioned by Davis, had two aims: to ensure that planters turned to food production, and to create a cotton scarcity that might lead to foreign recognition. More food was produced but the embargo failed to have much impact on Britain (see pages 191–4). Had cotton been exported in 1861 (when the Union blockade was weak), money from the proceeds could have been used to buy vital war supplies. Instead, Southern agents in Europe were handicapped by lack of funds.
- The Confederate government could have taken action sooner to control shipments of the blockade-runners. Before 1863, many blockade-runners were more concerned with making money than with helping the Confederacy, often bringing in luxury goods rather than essentials. By the time Davis's government got its blockade-running act together, many Southern ports had been captured.
- Given that many plantations turned to food production, which was less labour intensive than cotton growing, more slaves could have been impressed into government service and used for non-combat labour.

By 1865, the Confederate economy was near collapse. Machinery was wearing out and could not be replaced. Sources of raw materials were lost as Union forces took over large areas of the South. The breakdown of the railroad system, much of which was destroyed by Union armies, proved decisive in the Confederacy's final demise.

What impact did the war have on Southern society?

The social impact of the war

Confederate women

The Confederacy succeeded in mobilising about 900,000 men – over 40 per cent of its white males of fighting age. This had important implications for all aspects of Southern life, particularly the role of women.

- Wives of ordinary farmers had to work even longer hours to provide enough food for their families. They also had to practise strict domestic economy to conserve scarce resources.
- Wives of planters had to manage plantations and control restless slaves. In towns, women took over jobs that had been done by men.
- Women's groups made clothing, flags and other materials for the troops, tried to feed the poor and helped orphans.

Without female support the Confederacy would soon have collapsed. By mid-1862, fewer women were willingly sending their men off to war and some attempted to prevent them being drafted. Nevertheless, until the

winter of 1864–5 most women seemed to have remained committed to the rebel cause.

The impact of the war on slavery

The war affected the institution of slavery (see pages 241–2). Although there was no slave revolt, many slaves fled their plantations whenever it was safe to do so. Historian James Roark claims that, 'Slavery did not explode; it disintegrated … eroded plantation by plantation, often slave by slave, like slabs of earth slipping into a Southern stream.'

Poverty and demoralisation

Shortages of basic commodities, inflation and impressment had a demoralising effect on all parts of the South. Some areas were also devastated by Union troops. Sherman's marches through Georgia and the Carolinas in 1864–5 (see pages 185–7) left a huge swathe of destruction.

Refugees flooded the South as whites fled contesting armies. In an effort to tackle the problem of refugees, and poverty in general, Confederate and state governments, local and town authorities, plus private charities and wealthy individuals became involved in huge relief efforts. Yet by the winter of 1864–5 the scale of the problem was so great that it overwhelmed the relief activities.

Confederate opposition to the war

Did internal opposition bring about Confederate defeat?

Many non-slaveholders in upland areas of the South opposed secession, so much so that East Tennessee (along with West Virginia) effectively seceded from the Confederacy. Nevertheless, most white Southerners rallied to the Confederate cause in 1861; pro-Union sympathisers were a small minority.

Opposition grew as the war progressed. The introduction of conscription in 1862 was a major cause. Lukewarm Southerners now faced a choice of military service or overt opposition. As the war ground on, organised resistance to conscription intensified, especially in the mountain regions of North Carolina and Alabama. Armed men joined together to help one another in eluding or fighting off enrolment officers. Bands of draft evaders and deserters dominated some areas of the South.

'A rich man's war and a poor man's fight'?

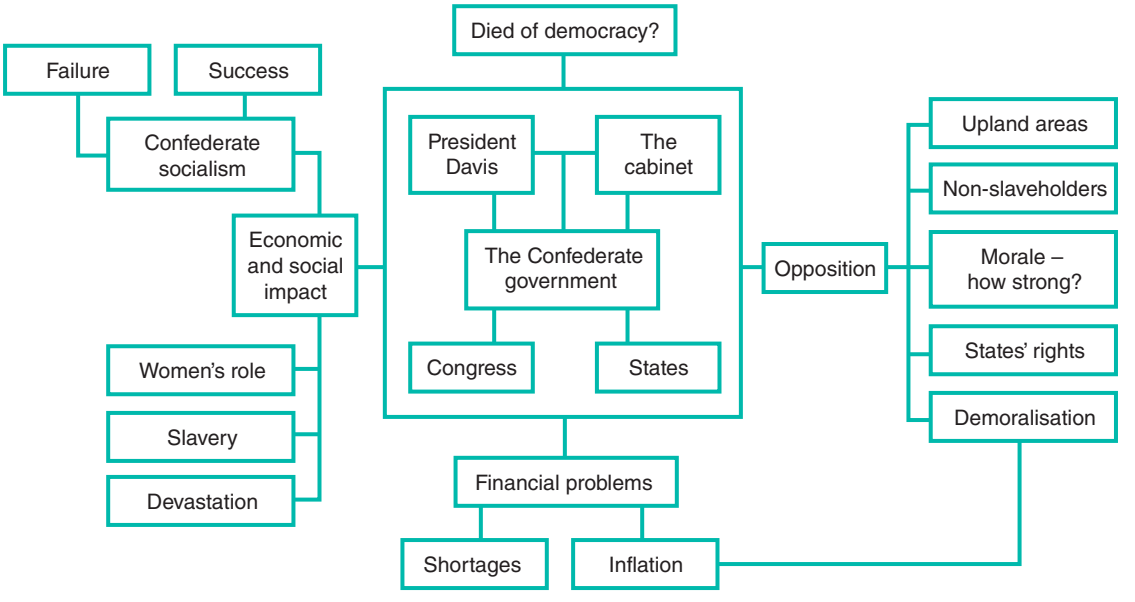
Conscription may have fuelled class conflict. Many ordinary farmers resented the fact that rich Southerners could avoid military service by either hiring substitutes or exempting themselves because they held a managerial role on a plantation with twenty slaves or more. In reality few wealthy Southerners shirked military duty; indeed, they were more likely to fight and die than poor Southerners. But the perception of 'a rich man's war and a poor man's fight' rankled. Significant numbers of non-slaveholders became restive and critical of the (perceived) planter-led government.

It may be that the opposition was not essentially 'class' based. It was strongest in upland areas where there had been limited support for

secession. It is thus difficult to separate regional from class divisions. In truth, most – non-slaveholding – Southerners remained committed to the Confederate cause until the end. Hatred of slaveholders and class resentment were not the main reasons why the loyalty of 'plain folks' to the Confederacy wavered. Southerners' will to fight faded only after they had been battered into submission by a stronger military force.

Confederate effort and morale

Southern morale seems to have been high in the first two years of the war, helped by a good harvest in 1861 and military success. However, defeats, huge casualties and growing hardship on the domestic front damaged morale. There was an understandable, if not necessarily justified, loss of faith in the Confederate leadership. Certainly Davis's government made mistakes. But arguably it was no more mistake-prone than Lincoln's government. Nor were Southerners less dedicated than Yankees. Most fought hard and long for their new nation, enduring far more hardship than Northerners. Although ultimately not equal to the challenge, the Confederacy's efforts on the home front were, in most respects, better than might have been expected. The bitter truth was that most of its domestic problems were insurmountable.



SUMMARY DIAGRAM

The Confederate war effort

4 The Union war effort

Key question: How effectively did the Union fight the war?

While the Union was favourite to win, 'big battalions' do sometimes lose wars. Resources by themselves do not win wars: they need efficient management.

Abraham Lincoln

How effective a war leader was Abraham Lincoln?

Lincoln is usually regarded as the USA's greatest president. Contemporaries would have been staggered by this opinion. So unpopular was he in the summer of 1864 that it seemed he would not be re-elected president.

The case against Lincoln

- Pre-1861, Lincoln had had little administrative experience. He was to prove himself a poor bureaucrat and his small staff did not provide much assistance. Accordingly, the machinery of government often became clogged.
- He can be accused of meddling and incompetence, especially in military matters. His choice of commanders of the Army of the Potomac (see pages 164–5) down to 1863 – McDowell, McClellan, Pope, McClellan (again), Burnside and Hooker – was uninspired.
- It is possible to depict Lincoln as essentially a devious politician – a man who spent far more time on trivial political matters rather than the war effort.
- Arguably he deserves little credit for foreign policy (handled by William Seward), financial measures (handled by Salmon Chase) or economic matters (which were left to Congress).
- Democrats accused him of acting tyrannically. On several occasions, he suspended the writ of habeas corpus: anyone could be imprisoned by military authority, for impeding conscription, or affording aid or comfort to the enemy. A horde of petty functionaries could decide who was loyal and who was not. Some were over-zealous; others simply settled old scores. Over 40,000 people were subject to arbitrary arrest.
- It is debatable to what extent Lincoln deserves his reputation as the 'Great Emancipator' (see pages 203–7).
- Arguably Lincoln had an easier task than Davis. The Union was favourite to win, regardless of who was president. Cynics might claim that it was his assassination, rather than his leadership, which assured Lincoln's reputation.

The case for Lincoln

It is easier to praise Lincoln than to criticise him. Most historians recognise his resilience, his diligence, his tenacity, his honesty, his sense of humour, his

unassuming style and his deceptive simplicity. He made a profound impression on those who knew him well. Generally, he selected able men and delegated well, playing his hunches, and giving those men who were successful free rein.

Perhaps Lincoln's most important role was shaping national strategy. With a mystical faith in the Union, he was determined to fight to the end to preserve it. One of his strengths was his ability to articulate the Union's war aims. The following extract from his Annual Message to Congress in 1862 is a typical example of his eloquence:

> *Fellow-citizens, we cannot escape history. We of this Congress and this administration, will be remembered in spite of ourselves … The fiery trial through which we pass will light us down in honor or dishonor to the latest generation … We shall nobly save or meanly lose the last, best hope of earth.*

He was a consummate politician, keeping in touch with public opinion. The time devoted to matters of patronage and party organisation was time well spent. It ensured that there were many loyal men within both his party and the government, a fact that served him well in 1864.

Lincoln's man-management skills ensured that he did not really alienate any member of his cabinet. Historian James McPherson writes: 'The President's unique blend of firmness and deference, the iron fist of decision clothed in the velvet glove of humour and tact, enabled him to dominate his subordinates without the appearance of domination.'

Lincoln's main preoccupations throughout his presidency were military matters and race; he rarely focused hard on other issues. There was no need, for example, to involve himself in economic matters. The Republican-controlled Congress enacted the party's economic programme – a programme that he supported. Lincoln generally worked well with Congress. His views tended to represent the middle ground but he kept open lines of communication with both the radical and conservative wings of his party. Sensitive to public opinion, he was concerned with what might – rather than what should – be achieved. His sense of political timing and his awareness of what was politically possible helped the Union to win the war and free the slaves.

As commander-in-chief, Lincoln did not shirk responsibility. Taking the view that waging war was essentially an executive function, he believed that he must use his powers to best effect. Where no precedent existed, he was prepared to improvise, stretching the authority of his office beyond any previous practice.

Lincoln and civil liberty

Lincoln was totally committed to 'government of the people, by the people, for the people'. Nevertheless, he was willing to suspend civil liberties,

including both freedom of speech and freedom of the press. Inevitably he came into conflict with both Congress and the Supreme Court over the legality of some of his actions.

Military rather than political goals were foremost in his mind when he allowed the restriction of civil liberties. Most of those imprisoned without trial came from states such as Missouri, which had many Southern sympathisers. Given the grim reality of guerrilla war (especially in Missouri), martial law was essential.

Elsewhere moderation was usually the norm. Many of those arrested, for example, blockade-runners and draft dodgers, would have been arrested whether the writ of habeas corpus had been suspended or not. Arrests rarely involved Democrat politicians or newspaper editors. Overall, Lincoln remained faithful to the spirit, if not always the letter, of the Constitution. Later generations have generally approved – even applauded – the way in which he tackled difficult issues of civil liberties.

Lincoln and military matters

Despite some initial insecurity about military matters, Lincoln was very much involved in the conduct of the war, cajoling and urging his generals forward. Some historians think that he showed considerable military talent, with an ability to concentrate on the wider issues rather than getting bogged down in matters of detail. As early as January 1862 he said: 'I state my general idea of this war to be that we have the greater numbers and the enemy has the greater facility of concentrating forces upon points of collision; that we must fail, unless we can find some way of making our advantage an overmatch for his; and that this can only be done by menacing him with superior forces at different points, at the same time.' To Lincoln's chagrin, Union generals proved unable to carry out such a strategy until 1864–5.

Some of Lincoln's appointments, if not wise militarily, made sense politically. Appointing generals who represented important ethnic, regional and political constituencies ensured that the North remained united. Ultimately, his military appointments gave the Union the winning team of Grant and Sherman.

Conclusion

For four years Lincoln stuck at his job. He worked hard – from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. most days – granting favours, distributing jobs, corresponding with friends and enemies, giving or listening to advice, accepting or rejecting proposals. Although often severely depressed, he kept going even when the war was going badly. Nothing kept him from his work, not even his own personal tragedies. (His youngest son died in 1862 and his wife was mentally unstable thereafter.) He learned from his mistakes and revealed real qualities of leadership.

How effective was Lincoln's cabinet?

Lincoln's cabinet

Most of Lincoln's cabinet members remained at their posts for most of the war. Lincoln bothered little with the cabinet as such. He used the rare meetings as a sounding board to discuss the timing or language of statements he was about to issue or to get approval for actions he was about to take. The Secretaries usually saw Lincoln individually rather than en masse. Within their departments, most performed well, working hard themselves and keeping their subordinates hard at work.

Secretary of State Seward was regarded as Lincoln's right-hand man. Salmon Chase, Secretary of the Treasury, was the main radical spokesman in the cabinet. Lincoln's first Secretary of War, Simon Cameron, had a reputation for corruption before the war and this reputation quickly grew. In 1862 he was replaced by Edwin Stanton, an ex-Democrat, who proved himself efficient and incorruptible. Once a severe critic of Lincoln, Stanton became one of his closest advisors. Gideon Welles, Secretary of the Navy, served the Union well throughout the war. Postmaster Montgomery Blair came from one of the USA's best-known political families. On the conservative wing of the party, his father continued to own slaves until 1865. Caleb Smith, Secretary of the Interior, and Bates, the Attorney General, played minor roles.

? Look at Source E. Why do you think the cabinet members were positioned like this?

SOURCE E

An illustration after Francis Carpenter's painting of Lincoln and his cabinet. Treasury Secretary Chase stands to the left of Lincoln (who is reading the Emancipation Proclamation). Secretary of State Seward sits with legs crossed.



Congress

How well did Congress co-operate with Lincoln?

Depleted by the loss of its Southern members, Congress was controlled by the Republicans throughout the war. In 1861, the House of Representatives had 105 Republicans, 43 Democrats and 28 'Unionists'. Of the 48 Senators, 31 were Republican. The Republicans retained control after the 1862 mid-term elections. Given the Republican dominance, Congress generally co-operated with Lincoln. While there was some conflict over the boundaries of executive and legislative power, Congress provided the means for Lincoln to conduct the war.

Radical Republicans often blamed Lincoln for failing to prosecute the war more vigorously or to move against slavery more rapidly. However, the radicals were not a disciplined group. Nor did they always oppose Lincoln. When he wanted their support, he usually got it.

State government

State governments provided invaluable assistance to Lincoln, especially in raising troops. Most states were Republican controlled. Those that did fall under Democrat control did little to hinder the Union war effort.

Voluntary associations

Neither the federal nor state governments had the apparatus or traditions to manage all aspects of the war. Voluntary organisations helped to fill the gaps. The United States Sanitary Commission, for example, did much to help the Army Medical Bureau. Sanitary Commissioners prowled Union camps and hospitals, insisting on better food and conditions. Thousands of women were the mainstay of the Commission, knitting, wrapping bandages and raising funds.

Financing the war

How successfully did the Union finance the war?

In 1861 the Union (unlike the Confederacy) had an established Treasury, gold reserves and an assured source of revenue from tariffs. Nevertheless, Union financial structures were not ready for war, and over the winter of 1861–2 the whole banking system seemed near to collapse. Secretary Chase kept the Treasury afloat by raising loans and issuing bonds, in which ordinary citizens, as well as bankers, were encouraged to invest. One million Northerners ended up owning shares in the national debt.

Two-thirds of the Union's revenue was raised by loans and bonds. One-fifth was raised by taxes. An income tax, the first in US history, was enacted in 1861 and imposed a 3 per cent tax on annual incomes over $800. Far more important (it brought in ten times as much as the income tax) was the Internal Revenue Act (1862). This basically taxed everything.

Congress also approved an inflationary monetary policy. In 1862, the Legal Tender Act authorised the issuing of $150 million in paper currency, not redeemable in gold or silver. Ultimately 'greenback' notes to the value of $431

million were issued. The Legal Tender Act provided the Treasury with resources to pay its bills and restored investors' confidence sufficiently to make possible the sale of $500 million of new bonds.

Linked to these measures were attempts to reform the banking system. Chase's ideas finally bore fruit in the 1863 and 1864 National Banking Acts. While the new national banks pumped paper money into the economy, a tax of 10 per cent on state bank notes ensured that the Union was not awash with paper money. Inflation, over the course of the war, was 80 per cent.

What impact did the war have on the Union's economy?

The economic impact of the war

After 1861, the Republicans were able to pass economic legislation, previously held up by Democratic opposition:

- The 1862 Homestead Act offered free 160-acre farms out West to settlers who worked on them for five years.
- Higher tariffs provided the government with extra revenue and also protected US industry from foreign competition.
- Generous railway subsidies were meted out. The most important railway development was the decision to build a trans-continental line from Omaha to San Francisco.

By twentieth-century standards there was little assertion of federal power in the management of the wartime economy. There was no rationing, no attempt to control prices, wages and profits, and no central control of the railways. Although the US government was now a huge customer, businessmen made their own decisions and controlled their own production.

Union economic success

The Northern economy, with its abundant raw materials, ready capital and technological expertise, was able to ensure that Union armies were well equipped and that civilians did not go short of basic commodities. It was not certain in 1861 that Northern industry would meet the challenge. The loss of Southern markets threatened disaster. However, the overall effect of the war, especially the need to feed, equip and arm the Union forces, helped to stimulate economic growth.

Production gains were especially notable in war-related industries such as canned food, shipbuilding and munitions. Railways made great profits. For the first time their full carrying capacity was utilised. The increased money supply ensured that manufacturers found it easier to pay off debts and secure loans for investment and expansion. The shortage of labour may have encouraged the introduction of new machinery in some industries. The war may also have resulted in businessmen adopting wider horizons and thinking in terms of millions (of bullets, boots, etc.) rather than thousands. Some men made fortunes from the war. Huge profits encouraged further expansion.

Farmers also benefited. Union forces had to be fed and there was a growing demand from abroad, particularly from Britain. Exports of wheat, corn, pork and beef doubled. The Union states grew more wheat in 1862–3 than the USA as a whole had grown in the previous record year of 1859 – and this despite the fact that many farm boys were serving in the Union armies. The growth in production was due, in part, to the increased use of farm machinery, but mainly because more land was brought under cultivation – over 2.5 million acres between 1862 and 1864.

Union economic problems

However, the war's effects were not all positive:

- Some industries, for example the New England cotton mills, suffered hard times.
- The war probably reduced immigration by some 1.3 million people – nearly twice the number lost by both sides in the war.
- Economic growth in the 1860s was slower (some claim) than in any other decade in the nineteenth century.
- If there was a shift to mass production techniques, this was arguably a trend that was well under way before the war and one that was not particularly affected by it.

Conclusion

The North's economy grew, in spite, if not because, of the war. In March 1865 a New York paper reported: 'There never was a time in the history of New York when business prosperity was more general, when the demand for goods was greater … than within the last two or three years.' According to historian Peter Parish, 'The abiding impression [of the Northern economy] is one of energy and enterprise, resilience and resource … The war was not the soil in which industrial growth took root, nor a blight which stunted it, but a very effective fertiliser.'

The social impact of the war

What impact did the war have on Northern society?

In many ways, life for most Northerners during the war went on as usual. However, the fact that regiments were often made up of men from a single town or county could mean sudden calamity for a neighbourhood if that regiment suffered heavy casualties. The fact that so many men of military age left their homes to fight meant there were more job opportunities for women, who worked as teachers, in industry and in government service. However, the war did not bring women much closer to political or economic equality. Although there were some calls for female suffrage in the 1860s, women were not given the vote and after 1865 returned to their old roles.

There is some evidence that during the war the rich became richer while the poor became poorer. Some working men saw their real earnings drop as prices rose faster than wages. The result was labour unrest and some violent, albeit small-scale, strikes. However, some workers enjoyed rising wages

resulting from a shortage of labour. Many working-class families also benefited from bounties and wages paid to soldiers. Overall, therefore, there was no major rise in class tension.

In some areas, the war led to an increase in racial tensions. Some Northerners resented fighting a war to free the slaves. Anti-black feeling was also fanned by job competition and the employment of black **strike breakers**. In 1863, there were race riots in a number of Northern cities. The most serious was in New York (see page 153).

The war initially led to a reduction in immigrant numbers – 92,000 in 1861–2 compared with 154,000 in 1860. But by 1863 there were over 176,000 immigrants and by 1865 250,000 – proof of the North's booming economy and also of the government's success in publicising opportunities and encouraging immigrants. Some immigrants, attracted by the high bounties, volunteered for the Union army. Others helped economic growth. The war may have helped the process of assimilation and helped tame anti-immigrant feeling. However, this should not be exaggerated. Ethnic tensions remained strong after 1865.

KEY TERM

Strike breakers Workers employed to do the work of those on strike.

War Democrats Those Democrats who were determined to see the war fought to a successful conclusion.

How serious was internal opposition to the Union war effort?

Opposition to the war

In 1861, leading Northern Democrats like Senator Douglas called on all Northerners to rally round Lincoln. Lincoln, aware of the need to maintain unity, appointed Democrats to his cabinet and to high military command. Some **War Democrats** threw in their lot totally with Lincoln. But as the war went on, Democratic opposition increased. Democrats disliked:

- the way the war was being handled
- Republican economic policies
- Lincoln's arbitrary measures
- efforts to end slavery.

Reflecting and exploiting Northern racist views for all they were worth and capitalising on war weariness, the Democrats had some success in the 1862 mid-term elections.

The Copperheads

Although many Democrats saw the conflict as a Republican war, most still wanted to restore the Union; pro-Confederate Northerners were a small minority. This was not the way that many Republicans saw it. In the West, Republicans labelled their Democratic opponents 'Copperheads' (after a poisonous snake) and claimed that they belonged to subversive, pro-Southern secret societies which planned to set up a North-west Confederacy that would make peace with the South. Republican leaders realised that charges of treason could be used to discredit the Democrat Party as a whole and could serve as an excuse to organise Union Leagues – Republican-led societies pledged to defend the Union.

Clement Vallandigham

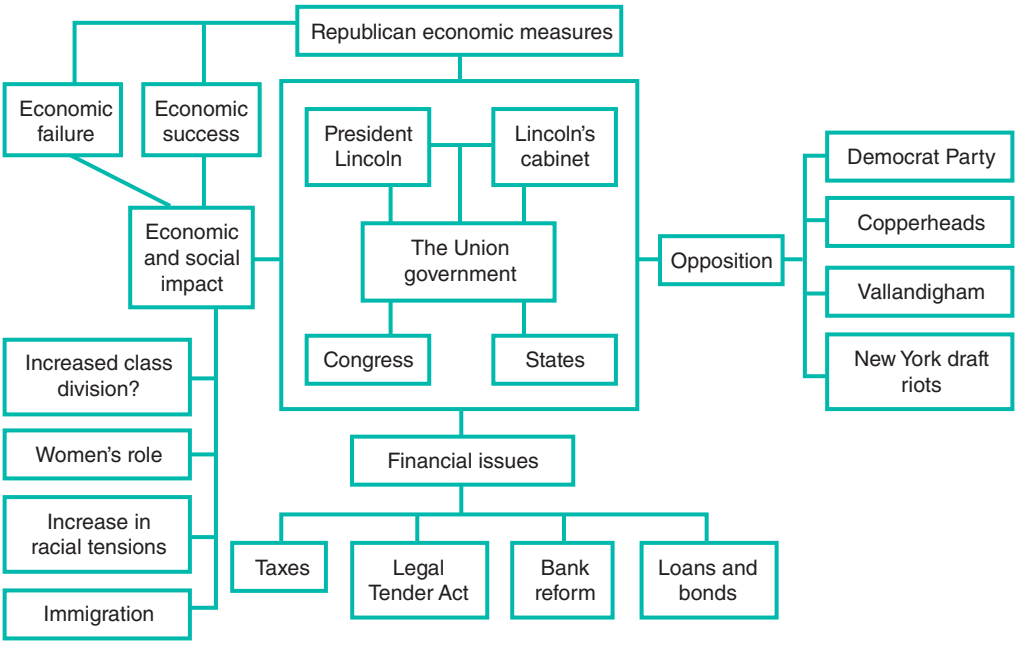
Democrat dissent reached its height in early 1863 when Union military failures fostered a sense of defeatism. Some Democrats thought that the time had come to make peace. Clement Vallandigham, campaigning to become governor of Ohio, denounced the war and called upon soldiers to desert. He was seeking to be made a martyr and a martyrdom of sorts duly followed. On the orders of General Burnside, Vallandigham was arrested and tried by a military tribunal. Found guilty of treason, he was sentenced to imprisonment for the rest of the war. This led to a chorus of protest from outraged Democrats. Even some Republicans were appalled that a civilian had been tried and sentenced by a military court merely for making a speech.

Lincoln, while not liking what Burnside had done, saw no alternative but to support him. By discouraging enlistment and encouraging desertion, Vallandigham had broken the law. 'Must I shoot a simple-minded soldier-boy who deserts, while I must not touch a hair of a wily agitator who induces him to desert?' mused Lincoln. 'I think that in such a case, to silence the agitator, and save the boy is not only constitutional, but withal a great mercy.'

However, Lincoln, anxious to avoid making Vallandigham a martyr, decided to banish him to the Confederacy for the duration of the war. Soon tiring of the South, Vallandigham moved to Canada where he continued to conduct his campaign for governor of Ohio. But the upturn in Union military fortunes after July 1863 undermined his cause. Along with other pro-peace Democrats, he lost his election contest in 1863.

The New York draft riots

The most serious internal violence came in New York in July 1863. The New York riots followed the enforcement of the 1863 Conscription Act. New York's Democrat Governor, Horatio Seymour, whipped up opposition to the draft. When the names of the first draftees were drawn, a mob of mostly Irish workers attacked the recruiting station. The mob then went on the rampage, venting its fury on blacks who were blamed for the war. For several days New York was in chaos. At least eleven blacks were lynched and the Colored Orphan Asylum was set on fire. Economic, ethnic, racial and religious factors all played a part in causing the riots. Lincoln sent in 20,000 troops to restore order. At least 120 people – mainly rioters – died in the process.



SUMMARY DIAGRAM

The Union war effort

5 Military leadership

Key question: How well did Union and Confederate generals lead their armies in the Civil War?

The Confederacy lost the Civil War. Was this because its main generals, particularly Robert E. Lee, waged the wrong kind of war?

Did the Confederacy fight the wrong kind of war?

The Confederate war effort

Attack or defence?

Over the last half century many historians have claimed that Davis and Lee pursued a flawed military strategy. They chose to pursue what has been labelled an 'offensive–defensive' strategy. This consisted of placing conventional armies in an essentially defensive posture to protect as much territory as possible and launching offensive movements when circumstances seemed promising. Lee emphasised the 'offensive', seeking to gain the initiative, and win a decisive military victory.

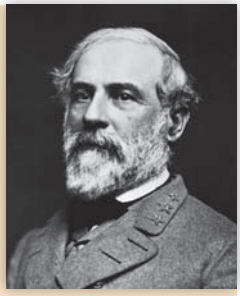
Robert E(dward) Lee, 1807–70

Born in Virginia, Lee was the son of Revolutionary War General 'Lighthorse Harry' Lee and a descendant of other prominent Virginia families. Graduating from West Point in 1829, he enjoyed a distinguished military career, fighting with distinction in the Mexican War, serving as an engineer out West and holding the post of superintendent at West Point. In 1831, he married Mary Custis, the daughter of George Washington's adopted son: he inherited her father's mansion at Arlington, along with 63 slaves.

In many respects his political beliefs were those of Virginia's slave-owning aristocracy. When Virginia seceded from the Union in 1861, he rejected President Lincoln's appeals to lead the Union army. Resigning from the Union army, he became (at first an unsuccessful) commander of Virginia's forces and then (in March 1862) Davis's chief military adviser. From June 1862 until April 1865 he led the Confederacy's main army – the Army of Northern Virginia.

A skilled tactician, he favoured offensive strategies and achieved a number of stunning victories over larger Union armies, for example at Second Manassas (see pages 170–1) and at Chancellorsville (see page 174). In the course of his success in 1862–3, he suffered heavy losses, especially at Antietam (see pages 171–3) and Gettysburg (see page 174–7). Despite waging an effective defensive campaign in 1864–5, he was ultimately unsuccessful in defending Richmond. His surrender at Appomattox in April 1865 (see page 188) was the death-knell of the Confederacy.

After 1865, Lee served as president of Washington College in Virginia, championing Southern grievances until his death in 1870. After his death, he came to be viewed as a heroic American by both Northerners and Southerners.



How good a general was Lee?
Historians disagree about Robert E. Lee. Some think he was the Confederacy's greatest hero. Others think that he was the reason the Confederacy lost.

Historian Edward Hagerman:

'Lee took longer to learn from his experience that the frontal assault contributed only to attrition without victory than any other field commander in the Civil War.'

Historian James McPherson:

'… the Confederacy had a chance to win the war – not by conquering the North or destroying its armies, but by sapping the Northern will and capacity to conquer the South and destroy Confederate armies. On three occasions the Confederacy came close to winning on these terms. Each time it was Lee who almost pulled it off. His victories at the Seven Days and second Manassas battles and the invasion of Maryland in the summer of 1862; his triumph at Chancellorsville and the invasion of Pennsylvania in 1863; and the casualties his army inflicted on Grant's forces in the Wilderness–Petersburg campaign in the spring and summer of 1864 … these three campaigns each came close to sapping the Northern will to continue the war … Of all Confederate commanders, Lee was the only one whose victories had some potential for winning the war. The notion that a more gradual strategy would have done better is speculative at best.'

Lee's penchant for attack has been criticised. Arguably a more defensive strategy would have conserved manpower, thereby enabling the Confederacy to prolong the war and perhaps exhaust Union will. Historians Grade McWhiney and Perry Jamieson argue that the Confederacy literally bled itself to death in the first three years of the war by making costly attacks and losing its bravest men. Lee is seen as a main culprit.

But would a purely defensive strategy have been more successful? General Joe E. Johnston was the Confederate exponent of defensive warfare. Rather than stand and fight, he surrendered huge chunks of land in North Virginia in 1862 and in Georgia in 1864. This did not enhance Southern morale.

Moreover, Confederate retreats often led to disastrous sieges and huge surrenders, for example Fort Donelson (1862), Vicksburg (1863) and Atlanta (1864). When Lee was finally forced on the defensive in 1864–5, his defeat was inevitable.

Although Lee has become a target for revisionist historians, most scholars still think he should be held in high regard. Despite being outnumbered in every major campaign, he won victories which depressed Union and bolstered Confederate morale. Without Lee's generalship the Confederacy would probably have crumbled earlier. If other Confederate generals had fought as well, the war might have had a different outcome.

Guerrilla war

The Confederate leadership has been taken to task for attempting to fight a conventional rather than a guerrilla war. However, a purely guerrilla-style war strategy in 1861 was inconceivable:

- It would have meant the loss of territory (and thus of slaves). This would have alienated most Southerners and seriously damaged morale.
- Davis hoped to win British and French recognition. Neither country would have recognised a fledgling Confederacy that relied on guerrilla units rather than on a formal army.
- During the war there was considerable Confederate guerrilla activity in Florida, Tennessee, Virginia and Missouri (where it was particularly nasty). However, when Davis called for an all-out guerrilla war in April 1865 there were few takers. Most Southerners recognised that a guerrilla war would simply prolong the misery with little prospect of winning independence.

Virginia or the West?

Some historians think that Lee's strategic vision was limited to Virginia, where his influence concentrated Confederate resources at the expense of the West. The result was that the Confederacy lost the West, and thus lost the war.

Such criticism is unfounded. Lee was commander of the Army of Northern Virginia; Virginia was thus his priority. If anyone was to blame for a Virginia-focused strategy it was Davis. In fairness to Davis, it seems highly unlikely that the Confederacy could have won the war by concentrating most of its forces in the West, where military conditions, especially control of the major rivers, favoured the Union. Virginia, the South's most important industrial state, had to be defended. In Virginia geographical conditions favoured the defender. Moreover, it made sense to give most resources to the best army (the Army of Northern Virginia) and the best general (Lee).

Indeed, Davis might be criticised not so much for his preoccupation with Virginia, but instead for dividing scarce resources more or less equally between East and West. However, Davis knew that the Confederacy could

not survive long without both Virginia and the West. He had to try and hold both, with limited manpower and limited talent.

Confederate Western generals

Many of the Confederacy's problems in the West stemmed from its poor commanders. The first overall Western commander, Albert Johnston, let Union forces break through the Tennessee and Cumberland river defence line in early 1862. Beauregard made plans not based on realities. Bragg quarrelled with everyone and had a poor record. Joe Johnston always had one eye fixed on retreat. Hood was a disaster. However, in fairness to the rebel generals, their armies were under-resourced and they had major problems of supply.

Union generals

How skilful were Union generals?

The Union eventually found the winning team of Ulysses S. Grant and William T. Sherman. Grant, often regarded as the war's greatest soldier, displayed his talent when capturing Fort Donelson (1862) and Vicksburg (1863). He became overall Union commander in March 1864. According to his supporters, he had a concept of the total-war strategy necessary to win the conflict, the skill to carry out that strategy, and the determination to keep pressing it despite the high cost in casualties.

SOURCE F

Petersburg, Va. Officers of the 114th Pennsylvania Infantry playing cards in front of tents, August 1864.



Look at Source F. What do you think the relationship of the two African Americans was to the four other men? ?

Historians have also praised Sherman (see page 186). His capture of Atlanta and his marches through Georgia and the Carolinas, reaching parts of the Confederacy that the Confederate government thought could not be reached, weakened the South logistically and psychologically.

However, the Union army had more than its fair share of blunderers. Inept Union leadership, on several occasions, gave the Confederacy a chance of victory.

Moreover, Grant and Sherman were far from supermen. Their 1864–5 campaigns were won mainly because their forces were larger and better equipped than those of the enemy.

Ulysses S. Grant, 1822–85



Grant was born in Point Pleasant, Ohio in 1822, the son of a tanner. In 1839, he received a congressional appointment to West Point. Only a mediocre student, he determined to embark on a military career. He served in the Mexican War and then, after getting married to Julia Dent in 1848, was assigned to the Pacific coast in 1852. Unhappy with his posting and the fact that he lacked the funds to bring his wife and two sons to join him, he resigned from the army in 1854. Unable to make a success in civilian life, he moved to Galena Illinois to work in his father's leather goods store.

In 1861, his military experience and useful political influence ensured that he was rapidly promoted to brigadier-general. In his first battle at Belmont, Missouri in November 1861, he displayed characteristic aggressiveness. In 1862, he won a major success when he captured Fort Donelson (see page 165), was almost defeated at the battle of Shiloh (see pages 166–7) but responded to the first day's setbacks with a counterattack that redeemed Union fortunes. After months of frustration, Grant masterminded the capture of Vicksburg in July 1863 (see page 177) and won a major victory at Chattanooga in November 1863 (see page 179). In March 1864 he was appointed General-in-Chief of the Union Army. His campaigns in Virginia against Robert E. Lee in 1864–5 cost terrible casualties but ensured Union victory (see pages 181–2).

Grant continued to command the US army during Reconstruction, eventually breaking with President Andrew Johnson and becoming Republican Party presidential nominee in 1868. Elected president, he was re-elected in 1872. A series of corruption scandals dogged his presidency. Although his personal reputation for integrity survived, his judgement was questioned.

In the early 1880s, he was enticed into a fraudulent investment firm and lost most of his money. Bankrupt and suffering from throat cancer, he set about writing his memoirs which he hoped would leave his family financially secure. He completed his highly regarded *Personal Memoirs*, which became a best-seller, a few days before his death.

How good a general was Grant?
Contemporaries at the time and historians since have debated what made Grant such a good general.

President Lincoln:

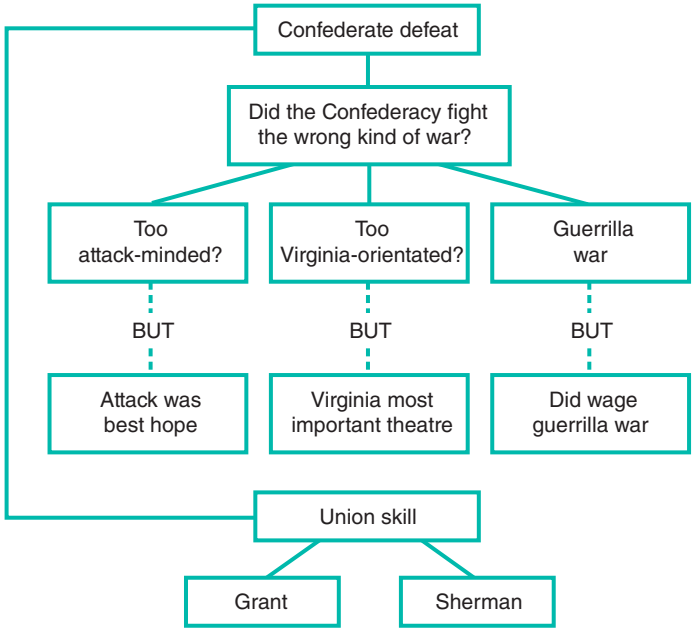
'The great thing about Grant … is his perfect coolness and persistency of purpose. I judge he is not easily excited – which is a great element in an officer.'

General Sherman:

'I am a damn sight smarter than Grant. I know a great deal more about war, military history, strategy, and administration, and about everything else than he does. But I tell you where he beats me, and where he beats the world. He don't care a damn for what the enemy does out of his sight, but he scares me like hell.'

Grant had his own views:

'The art of war is simple enough. Find out where your enemy is. Get at him as soon as you can. Strike at him as hard as you can and as often as you can, and keep moving on.'



SUMMARY DIAGRAM

Military leadership

Chapter summary

Union versus Confederacy: the war 1861–5

The Union, with its greater resources, was always favoured to win the Civil War. However, leadership, both political and military, can prove decisive in war. Debate continues about the leadership skills of Jefferson Davis and Abraham Lincoln. There are similar debates about the effectiveness of Robert E. Lee and Ulysses S. Grant, the two chief military commanders. Ultimately the Union won the war. This may have been the result of great leadership, as well as great resources. The Confederacy lost. It may be that this was the result of poor leadership, as well as a lack of resources. Or it may be that Davis and Lee were brilliant leaders who ensured that the Confederacy survived as long as it did.

Examination advice

How to answer 'to what extent' questions

The command term to what extent is a popular one in IB exams. You are asked to evaluate one argument or idea over another. Stronger essays will also address more than one interpretation. This is often a good question in which to discuss how different historians have viewed the issue.

Example

'President Lincoln was a more effective wartime leader than President Davis.' To what extent do you support this statement?

1 While you may be tempted to state that you are 100 per cent on one side or another, a better tactic would be to discuss several possibilities and why these might suggest that overall Lincoln or Davis was the better leader than the other. Each president had his own strengths and weaknesses and as many of these as possible should be explored. Beyond stating the degree to which you agree with the premise, you must focus on the word effective in the question. Consider what it means to be an effective leader.

2 First take at least five minutes to write a short outline. One strategy in your outline might be to list all the elements you think an effective wartime leader should have. Then, you could decide whether Lincoln and Davis had each of these. An example of an outline is given below.

Characteristics of an effective wartime leader	*Lincoln*	*Davis*
Ability to rally the public	x	x
Ability to promote the cause or national purpose	x	x
Ability to choose generals and push them to do one's bidding		
Ability to listen and be open to strong arguments from military specialists	x	x
Ability to direct foreign policy	x	
Ability to direct the economy/raise money	x	
Ability to delegate responsibility	x	
Ability to get political support in Congress	x	

3 In your introduction, state what the qualities an effective wartime leader should possess. Next, be sure to state clearly to what extent you agree with the idea that Lincoln was a more effective wartime leader than Davis and, briefly, why. An example of a good introductory paragraph for this question is given on the following page.

Abraham Lincoln directed the US in its time of crisis by demonstrating many leadership qualities that served the nation. These included the ability to delegate responsibility, rally the nation, and remain focused on what he considered to be the national purpose, which was to preserve the union at all costs. In contrast, his opponent, Jefferson Davis, was not nearly as successful. Davis did not have nearly the same amount of resources needed to combat his much better equipped and financed opponent. Furthermore, Davis ran through four secretaries of state and six secretaries of war. This lack of consistency did reflect weaker wartime leadership.

4 In the body of the essay, you need to discuss each of the points you raised in the introduction. Devote at least a paragraph to each one. If, for example, you think Lincoln raised the nation's morale, be sure to include why and how he did this. Here, you should also compare Lincoln to Davis. What did the President of the Confederacy do in similar circumstances that were worse or better than Lincoln? Explain this fully. Another aspect worth exploring is the choice of the generals who will actually direct the fighting. Again, be sure to make the connection between the points you raise with the major thrust of your argument. An example of how one of the points could be addressed is given below.

A key quality necessary in a successful wartime leader is the ability to choose generals who will carry out orders, pursue military advantages, and maintain discipline. Lincoln's choices of McDowell and McClellan as commander of the Army of the Potomac, for example, were uninspired. Not surprisingly, because of poor military leadership it was not until 1863 that the Union forces were able to turn the tide in their favour. This was due in large measure to Lincoln's appointment of General Grant as the overall military leader in the field. Finally, Lincoln had a general who shared his overall military strategy to wage war on many fronts. Lincoln's success in this regard was mixed since it took more than two years to find the right generals to lead their men to success. In those years, the Union suffered large losses. Some historians thought Lincoln's early appointments were the price Lincoln had to pay in order to satisfy ethnic, regional, and political factions which did, in fact, keep the nation united. Jefferson Davis appointed Robert E. Lee as his military commander and gave him great freedom to conduct the war as he

thought fit. Lee and other generals did inspire their men to fight well against what sometimes were difficult odds. However, it was not Davis's fault that the overall course of the war turned decisively against the South by 1863.

5 In the conclusion, be sure to offer final remarks on the extent to which Lincoln was the more effective wartime leader. An example of a good concluding paragraph is given below.

In conclusion, Lincoln was much more effective than Davis as a wartime leader. He was able to keep the nation's morale high, proved resilient and tenacious, and was able to articulate the aims of the war. Davis, on the other hand, was not able to establish good working relationships with his political colleagues and oversaw an economy that deteriorated as the war progressed.

6 Now try writing a complete answer to the question following the advice above.



Examination practice

Below are three exam-style questions for you to practise on this topic.

1 Compare and contrast the military leaders of the Northern and Southern forces.
(For guidance on how to answer 'compare and contrast' questions, see page 48.)

2 Explain why the war took so long to end.
(For guidance on how to answer 'explain' questions, see page 116.)

3 To what extent were Northern advantages in manpower and industrial output the deciding factors in the Civil War?

CHAPTER 7

The battles 1861–5

In 1861, thousands of men, egged on by family, friends and neighbours, rushed to volunteer, their main fear being that the war would be over before they could get a shot at the enemy. Instead, the war was to drag on for four terrible years. This chapter will examine why this happened and why the Union eventually won by considering the following key questions:

- Why did the war not end in 1861–2?
- How good a general was Robert E. Lee?
- Why were Union armies so successful in 1864–5?
- Why did Britain not intervene in the war?

1 The situation in 1861–2

Key question: *Why did the war not end in 1861–2?*

Union and Confederate plans in 1861

What were the military aims of both sides in 1861?

Winfield Scott, Union General-in-Chief, thought it would take many months to train and equip the armies needed to crush the insurrection. He supported the Anaconda Plan, the aim of which was slowly to squeeze life out of the Confederacy by naval blockade and by winning control of the Mississippi River. However, Lincoln, like most Northerners, looked for a quick decisive blow. He accepted that Union troops were untrained but as he wrote to General McDowell, who commanded Union forces around Washington: 'You are green, it is true, but they are green; you are all green alike.' Lincoln thus urged McDowell to march on Richmond.

Meanwhile Jefferson Davis pledged himself to defend every part of the Confederacy. He realised that lost territory would result in a depletion of resources and a decline in morale.

First Manassas

Why was First Manassas a crucial battle?

The main Confederate army of 22,000 men, led by General Beauregard, was positioned in North Virginia, south of the Bull Run River at Manassas. General Joe E. Johnston commanded another army of 11,000 men in the Shenandoah Valley. On 16 July, Union General McDowell marched south with some 30,000 men. His attack on 21 July was well conceived and he came near to winning a decisive victory.

Confederate forces fought bravely, especially Thomas Jackson's brigade which stood 'like a stonewall' (hereafter Jackson became known as 'Stonewall') and were saved by the arrival of Johnston's troops, many of whom travelled by train from the Shenandoah. Union troops panicked and fled. The Confederacy had won the first major battle. The South suffered 2,000 casualties (including 440 dead); the Union suffered 3,000 casualties (with over 600 dead). Southerners, who usually named battles after the nearest settlement, called the battle Manassas. Northerners, who usually named battles after the nearest geographical feature, called it (after the river) Bull Run.

The Confederacy made no attempt to follow up its victory by marching on Washington. Some see this as a missed opportunity to win the war. But the Southern army was as disorganised as the routed Union army. Desperately short of supplies, it was in no condition to attack Washington's defences. Even if the Confederates had captured Washington, it is unlikely that this would have ended the war.

Victory in the war's first major battle was a mixed blessing. It may have made some Southerners over-confident and complacent. Defeat, on the other hand, spurred the North on to more determined efforts. But victory did give the Confederates in Virginia an ***esprit de corps***, reinforced by a further victory at Ball's Bluff in October. Over the winter Johnston maintained the Confederate line along the Potomac River.

KEY TERM

Esprit de corps Loyalty to, and confidence in, something.

How good a general was McClellan?

General McClellan

After Manassas, McDowell was replaced by 34-year-old General George McClellan. Credited with some minor victories in West Virginia, he exuded an air of optimism and soon replaced Scott as General-in-Chief. McClellan remains one of the most controversial figures of the war. An able administrator, he restored the morale of the main Union army, now called the Army of the Potomac. He was popular with the soldiers, who referred to him affectionately as 'Little Mac'. McClellan's supporters claim he was a man of strategic vision who was betrayed by Republican political intrigue (McClellan was a Democrat) and by poor intelligence. Anxious not to create scars that might take a generation to heal, his hope of winning the war by manoeuvre and bringing it to an end without too much gore made – humane – sense.

Even McClellan's supporters concede, however, that he was an arrogant egotist. He failed to work collaboratively with his political masters, whom he constantly derided. (Lincoln was 'nothing more than a well-meaning baboon … the original gorilla', he wrote to his wife.) The main charge levied against McClellan is that, having built a fine army, he was too reluctant to use it. Over-cautious and indecisive, he had a chronic disposition to exaggerate the odds against him. This was apparent over the winter of 1861–2. Although his

army was twice the size of the rebel force facing him, he believed he was outnumbered. Lincoln and the Northern public grew increasingly impatient as McClellan refused to move.

The West 1861–2

What were the main events in the West in 1861–2?

Early skirmishes

Confederates won the first major battle in the West – at Wilson's Creek in Missouri in August 1861. Lacking resources, they were unable to follow up their victory. In Missouri, and across the West as a whole, Confederate forces were greatly outnumbered by Union troops.

In 1861, Lincoln divided the Union's Western forces:

- General Halleck was to concentrate on winning control of the Mississippi
- General Buell was to drive Confederate forces from Kentucky and Tennessee.

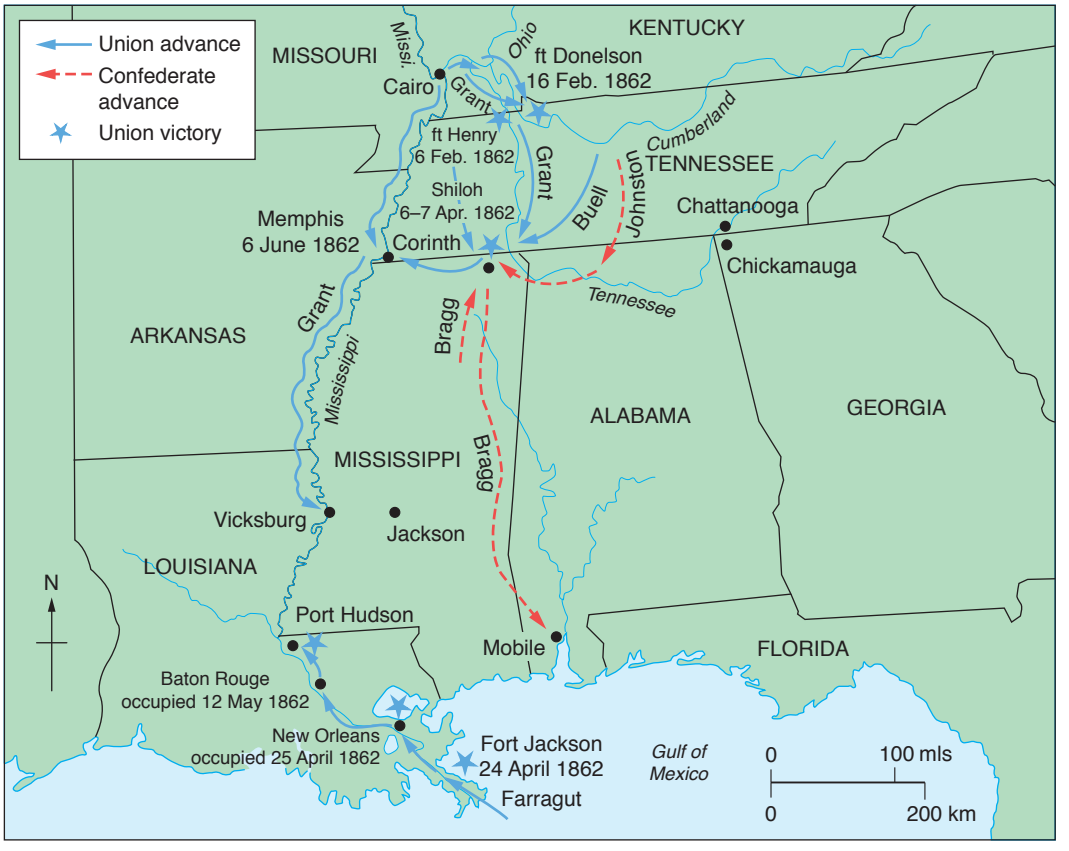
Lincoln hoped for a joint offensive. However, the divided command led to some confusion. Moreover, neither Halleck nor Buell was prepared to risk failure by attacking too soon. Both men had good excuses for delay. Their forces were short of arms, equipment and transport.

General Albert Sidney Johnston commanded the Confederate forces between the Appalachian and Ozark Mountains. Ordered to defend every foot of Southern territory, Johnston scattered his 40,000 troops along the southern borders of Kentucky and Missouri, hoping that a number of forts built at strategic points on the important rivers would hold up any Union advance.

In January 1862, troops from Buell's army, led by General Thomas, won the North's first real victory of the war at Mill Springs, Kentucky. Another branch of the Union army pushed the rebels out of Missouri and won a victory at Elkhorn Tavern, Arkansas.

Fort Henry and Fort Donelson

In February, Halleck sent 15,000 men under General Ulysses S. Grant (see page 158), accompanied by a flotilla of gunboats commanded by Andrew Foote, to capture key river forts. In February Foote's ships forced Fort Henry to surrender but were not sufficient to capture the stronger and more important Fort Donelson. Accordingly, Grant besieged the place, demanding 'unconditional and immediate surrender'. The 16,000 Confederate garrison duly surrendered and Union forces now controlled the Tennessee and Cumberland rivers, vital arteries into the South. Johnston retreated to Corinth, leaving Kentucky and most of Tennessee under Union control. Halleck now ordered Grant and Buell to push into south-west Tennessee.



The war in the West 1861–2

The battle of Shiloh

In early April, Grant, with over 40,000 men, encamped on the west bank of the Tennessee River at Shiloh, waiting for Buell's army. On 6 April Johnston launched a surprise attack. Many Union troops panicked and fled but enough regiments held out to ensure that the rebels did not win a total victory. The Confederate cause was not helped by the death of Johnston in the midst of battle. Beauregard took over. As the first day of battle ended, he telegraphed to Davis that he had won a 'complete victory'.

Grant remained calm – with good reason. That night, 25,000 men from Buell's army arrived. The next day the outnumbered Confederate army was forced to retreat. At Shiloh the rebels suffered 10,600 and the Union 13,000 casualties.

While Shiloh was certainly not Grant's best-fought battle, its outcome was important. The Union had turned back the rebel bid to regain the initiative. Halleck now assumed full command and advanced – or rather crawled – towards Corinth. (It took him nearly a month to cover 22 miles.) Davis,

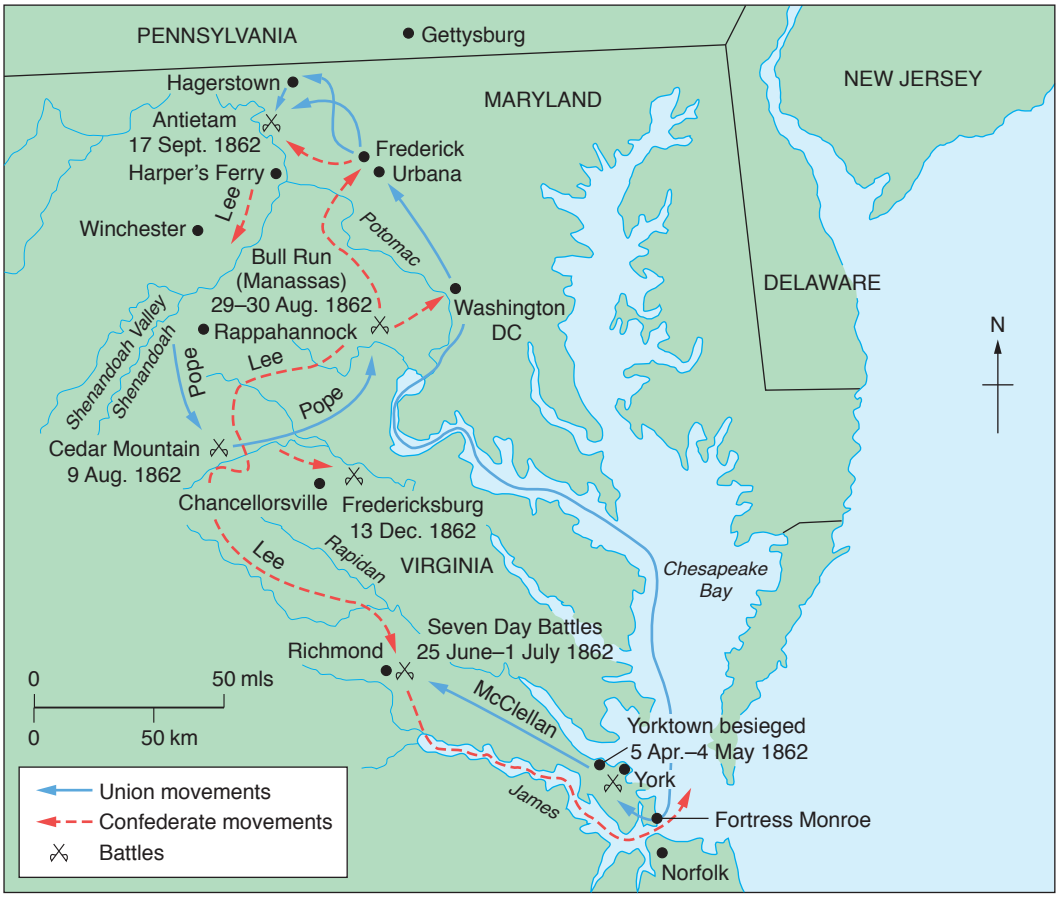
displeased by Beauregard's evacuation of Corinth, replaced him with General Bragg.

On the Union side, Halleck was appointed General-in-Chief. Lincoln hoped he would become a vigorous commander, co-ordinating Union strategy. Instead, he became something of a pen-pusher who neither laid down nor enforced a comprehensive strategy for the war as a whole.

The Peninsula campaign

Why was McClellan so slow?

In late January 1862, a frustrated Lincoln ordered McClellan to attack. But McClellan now went down with typhoid fever and was confined to bed for three weeks. On his recovery, rather than lead a direct march on Richmond, he planned to ferry the bulk of his army to Urbana so that it was between Richmond and the rebel army at Manassas. Just as he was ready to move, Johnston withdrew to new lines south of the Rappahannock river. Still anxious to avoid a frontal attack, McClellan now planned to attack Richmond up the peninsula between the York and James rivers.



The war in the East 1861–2

In April 1862, the Army of Potomac, 121,000 strong, was transported to Fortress Monroe – 70 miles from Richmond. The only rebel army ready to impede McClellan's advance was a force of 11,000 men commanded by General Magruder. Magruder convinced McClellan that he had thousands more men, simply by marching his small force round and round. Instead of attacking, McClellan settled down to besiege Yorktown, giving Davis time to send more men to the Peninsula. Just as he was ready to attack Yorktown, the Confederates withdrew. McClellan, delighted to have won another bloodless 'victory', advanced cautiously, finally reaching the outskirts of Richmond in late May. His forces greatly outnumbered the Confederates opposing him, but McClellan, convinced he was outnumbered, awaited reinforcements.

The Shenandoah Valley

McClellan never got his reinforcements, largely because of Stonewall Jackson's Shenandoah Valley campaign. Jackson, with 18,000 men, was sent into the Valley to ensure that (far larger) Union forces did not move south to Richmond. Jackson, a religious fanatic who saw himself as God's instrument,

Thomas 'Stonewall' Jackson, 1824–63

Born in 1824 in West Virginia, Jackson graduated from West Point in 1846. After fighting gallantly in the Mexican War, he resigned his commission to become a professor at the Virginia Military Institute in 1852. In 1861 Jackson, a deeply religious Presbyterian and a stern disciplinarian, joined the Confederate army. Soon promoted to brigadier general, he distinguished himself in a series of battles. His attack on the Union right flank at Chancellorsville in May 1863 (see page 174) enabled General Lee to win a remarkable victory. Mistakenly shot by Confederate soldiers on the night of his great success, his left arm was amputated. A week later, at the height of his reputation, he died of pneumonia.

By 1863, Jackson was the Confederacy's most acclaimed soldier. His death made him an icon of Southern heroism and commitment. Many believed that had he lived, the Confederacy might have won the war. Certainly Jackson had qualities:

- He performed impressively in the Shenandoah Valley, at Second Manassas and at Chancellorsville.
- Lee was able to trust Jackson with non-detailed orders, trusting him to take whatever action was necessary.

However, Jackson did have weaknesses:

- He did not fight well in the Seven Days battles (see page 170).
- He was extremely secretive about his plans. His subordinates, in consequence, were unaware of his intentions.



Jackson's own views on war

'Always mystify, mislead and surprise the enemy, if possible; and when you strike and overcome him, never let up in the pursuit so long as your men have strength to follow; for an army routed, if hotly pursued, becomes panic-stricken, and can then be destroyed by half their number. The other rule is, never fight against heavy odds, if by any possible manoeuvring you can hurl your own force on only a part, and that the weakest part, of your enemy and crush it. Such tactics will win every time, and a small army may thus destroy a large one in detail, and repeated victory will make it invincible.'

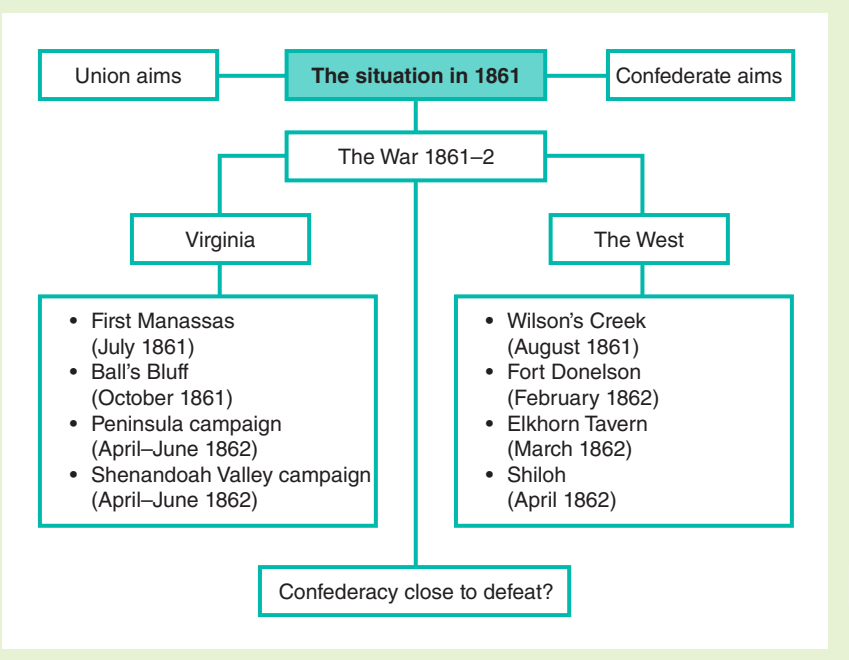
demanded a great deal of his men, who at first regarded him with suspicion. In a brilliant campaign from March to June 1862 he won their grudging respect, fighting six battles, marching his 'foot cavalry' hundreds of miles, inflicting 7,000 casualties on the enemy, diverting 60,000 Union troops from other tasks, and inspiring the South. Lincoln, worried at the threat that Jackson posed to Washington, did not send men to help McClellan. Instead, it was Jackson who marched south to fight McClellan.

Confederate problems in May 1862

Despite Jackson's success, the Confederacy seemed to be on the verge of defeat in May:

- Union naval forces captured New Orleans in April (see page 127).
- Most of the Mississippi Valley was now in Union hands.
- McClellan seemed certain to capture Richmond.

In April, Stanton, Lincoln's Secretary for War, anticipating victory, called a halt to federal recruiting.



SUMMARY DIAGRAM

The situation in 1861–2

2 The war 1862–3

Key question: How good a general was Robert E. Lee?

On 31 May, General Joe Johnston attacked McClellan's forces outside Richmond. The result was a costly draw: the Confederacy had 6,000 casualties, the Union 5,000. The most important outcome was the fact that Johnston was wounded and replaced by 55-year-old Virginian Robert E. Lee.

How successful was Lee in 1862?

Robert E. Lee

Considered by many to be America's finest soldier in 1861, Lee had been offered high command in the Union army by Lincoln, but had remained loyal to his state. The early part of the war had not gone well for him; after setbacks in West Virginia and the Carolinas, he became Davis's military adviser.

Lee now had the opportunity to display his prowess. Renaming his army the Army of Northern Virginia, he determined to seize the initiative, joining up with Jackson and attacking McClellan's flank.

The Seven Days

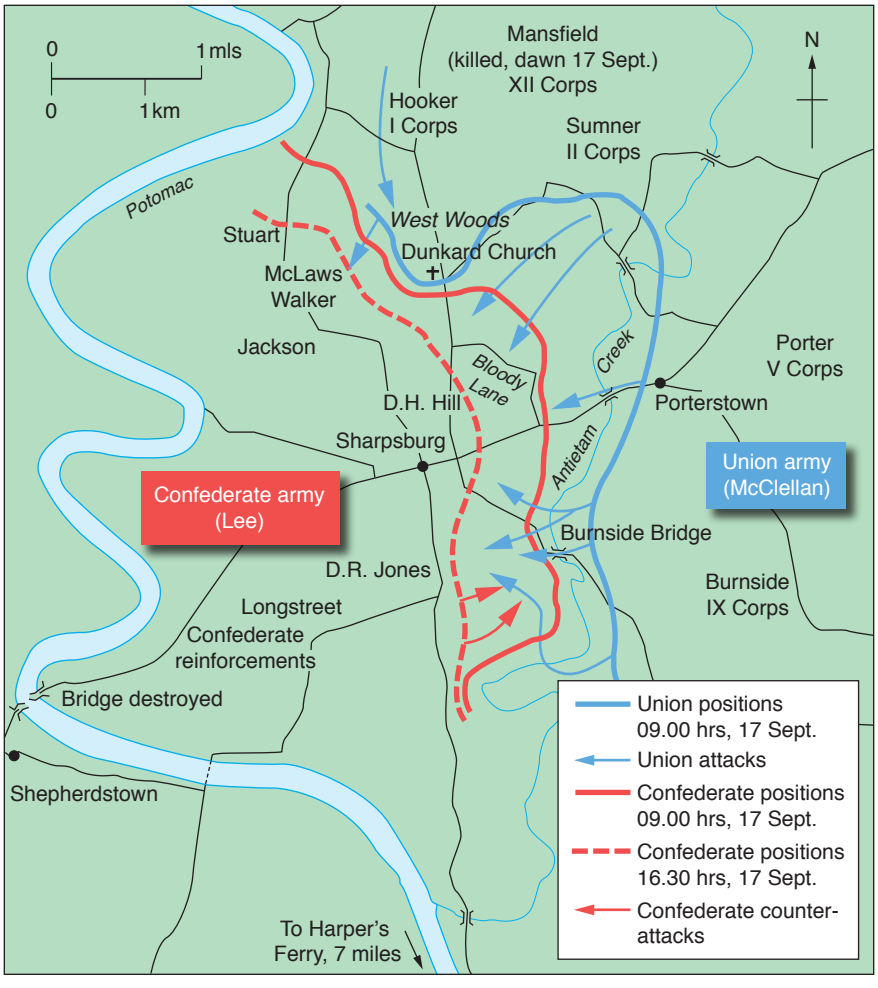
Lee attacked at the end of June. The week of battles that followed is known as 'The Seven Days'. Lee struck first at Mechanicsville. Jackson's late arrival meant that little was achieved. On 27 June, Lee attacked at Gaines Mill. Again Jackson failed to perform well but rebel forces finally broke the enemy line. In the last battle of the campaign, at Malvern Hill on 1 July 1862, Lee lost 5,000 men to the Union's 3,000.

The Seven Days cost the Confederacy 20,614 men; Union losses were 15,849. Over-complicated battle-plans and defects in command structure led to Lee making a number of disjointed attacks. He was also let down by Jackson, who was strangely lethargic. Lee, who had failed to destroy the Union army, was disappointed with the results of his offensive. Nevertheless, he had saved Richmond and forced a demoralised McClellan to retreat back down the Peninsula.

Second Manassas

Lincoln now appointed General Pope, who had won some small victories in the West, to command the Union forces around Washington. McClellan was ordered to evacuate the Peninsula and join Pope. With a united army, Pope would then advance on Richmond.

Lee, determined to strike first, headed north in mid-August with some 55,000 men. Dividing his army, he sent Jackson on a long sweep west and north of Pope, who was still awaiting McClellan's – slow – arrival. On



The Battle of Antietam

26–27 August, Jackson's 25,000 troops captured Pope's main supply depot at Manassas.

Pope, strengthened at last by advanced units of McClellan's army, attacked Jackson's outnumbered force. Second Manassas, fought on 29–30 August, was a Union disaster. Failing to appreciate that the rest of Lee's army was marching to Jackson's aid, Pope was defeated when General Longstreet attacked his left flank. Lee came close to winning the decisive victory that he was seeking. However, most Union troops escaped and retreated towards Washington. The Union lost 16,000 men, the Confederacy 9,000. Reluctantly Lincoln reappointed McClellan as commander-in-chief.

The battle of Antietam

Lee's aims

In September, Lee sent Jackson to capture Harper's Ferry while he himself invaded Maryland with 40,000 men. He aimed to:

- protect Virginia's harvest
- gain Maryland volunteers
- win a decisive victory
- demoralise the North
- persuade Britain to recognise the Confederacy.

After Second Manassas, Longstreet thought, 'we had the most brilliant prospects the Confederates ever had'.

Lee's lost plans

Lee's invasion did not go according to plan. He lost more soldiers from straggling and desertion than he gained from pro-Confederate Marylanders. He also lost a copy of his operational orders which mysteriously fell into McClellan's hands. Aware that Lee's army was divided, McClellan was in a tremendous position to defeat him. Although he frittered away much of his dazzling advantage, he did force Lee back toward the Potomac River. Instead of retreating into Virginia, Lee took up a position behind Antietam Creek.

McClellan delays

Given that he was hopelessly outnumbered, that both his flanks were vulnerable, and that he had the Potomac behind him, Lee's decision to offer battle seems incredible. If McClellan had attacked on 15 or 16 September Lee must surely have been defeated. Fortunately for Lee's reputation, McClellan did not attack. On 16 September, Jackson's corps rejoined Lee's army, which reduced the odds. Even so, McClellan still had a two-to-one advantage (75,000 against 37,000) when he finally attacked on 17 September.

The battle

Antietam, partly because it was so badly handled by McClellan, was really three separate battles. Union attacks came piecemeal, first from the north, then in the centre (where the Confederates took cover in a sunken farm road, later known as 'Bloody Lane') and finally in the south across Antietam Creek. All three attacks were partially successful but none was followed through to complete success and Lee, thanks to the arrival of General Ambrose Powell Hill from Harper's Ferry, managed to hang on. Antietam was the bloodiest single-day battle of the war. Lee lost 11,000 men, McClellan 12,000.

The results of Antietam

Although Lee's army had staged one of its most impressive performances, McClellan was able to claim victory because on 18 September Lee retreated into Virginia. Indeed, Antietam can be seen as the turning point of the war:

- Within days of the battle Lincoln issued his Emancipation Proclamation (see page 205).
- Lee's failure to win a decisive victory meant there was now little likelihood of British intervention (see page 193).

But McClellan failed to follow up his 'victory'. Exasperated with his excuses for inactivity, Lincoln relieved him of command in November, replacing him with General Burnside.

The battle of Fredericksburg

Burnside, with 100,000 men, marched south. Lee's army, 75,000 strong, took up a strong position behind Fredericksburg. On 13 December, Burnside launched a series of suicidal attacks. Union forces lost 11,000 men. Lee lost less than 5,000. Burnside, dissuaded from launching more attacks by his senior generals, pulled back across the Rappahannock. Union morale was not helped when Burnside's attempt to turn Lee's flank in January 1863 got bogged down in mud.

The War in the West in 1862–3

Why did the Union fail to achieve more success in the West in 1862?

Kentucky and Tennessee

In the late summer, General Bragg advanced into Kentucky. Few Kentuckians joined the Confederates and Bragg failed to make the most of his opportunities. Blundering into a Union army at Perryville in October, Bragg won a tactical victory but was forced to retreat into Tennessee. If Bragg's raid had raised then dashed Southern hopes, at least he had transferred the Confederates' main western operations from Mississippi to Tennessee.

In December 1862, General Rosecrans tried to drive Bragg out of Tennessee. On 31 December, the two armies severely mauled each other at Murfreesboro (or Stones River). Bragg renewed the battle two days later but his attack was beaten back and he had to withdraw. Tennessee remained quiet for six months. The main 'fighting' was in-fighting in the Confederate army between the quarrelsome Bragg and most of his generals.

Vicksburg

Over the winter of 1862–3, Union forces under Grant tried to take Vicksburg. The fortified town prevented Union control of the Mississippi. In Davis's view Vicksburg was 'the nail-head that held the South's two halves together'. The town was probably not as important as Davis thought. By this stage there was actually little Confederate traffic across the Mississippi. Nevertheless Vicksburg did have a symbolic importance. Its capture would demoralise the South and bolster the North.

Vicksburg's natural defences made it difficult to capture. Rebel cavalry constantly threatened the Union supply line. Over the winter Grant probed unsuccessfully for a crossing that would enable him to get his forces east of the Mississippi.

As the Union threat to Vicksburg grew, Davis appointed Joseph Johnston to oversee Confederate operations in the West. However, Johnston's exact power was ill-defined and Bragg (in Tennessee) and Pemberton (at Vicksburg) continued to exercise independent command. Davis's hope that Johnston would bring a unified vision to the west was not realised.

Which was more important in terms of ultimate Union victory – Gettysburg or Vicksburg?

Gettysburg and Vicksburg

The battle of Chancellorsville

In January 1863, Lincoln replaced Burnside with 'Fighting' Joe Hooker. Hooker had a hot temper and was known to be an intriguer. There were even rumours that he intended to set himself up as military dictator. Lincoln was prepared to risk the dictatorship. What he wanted was military success. By April, Hooker, with 130,000 men – twice as many as Lee – was ready to move. While General Sedgewick threatened Lee at Fredericksburg, the bulk of Hooker's army crossed the Rappahannock upstream, threatening Lee's left flank. By 30 April, the Union army had reached Chancellorsville in the heart of the wooded area known as the Wilderness.

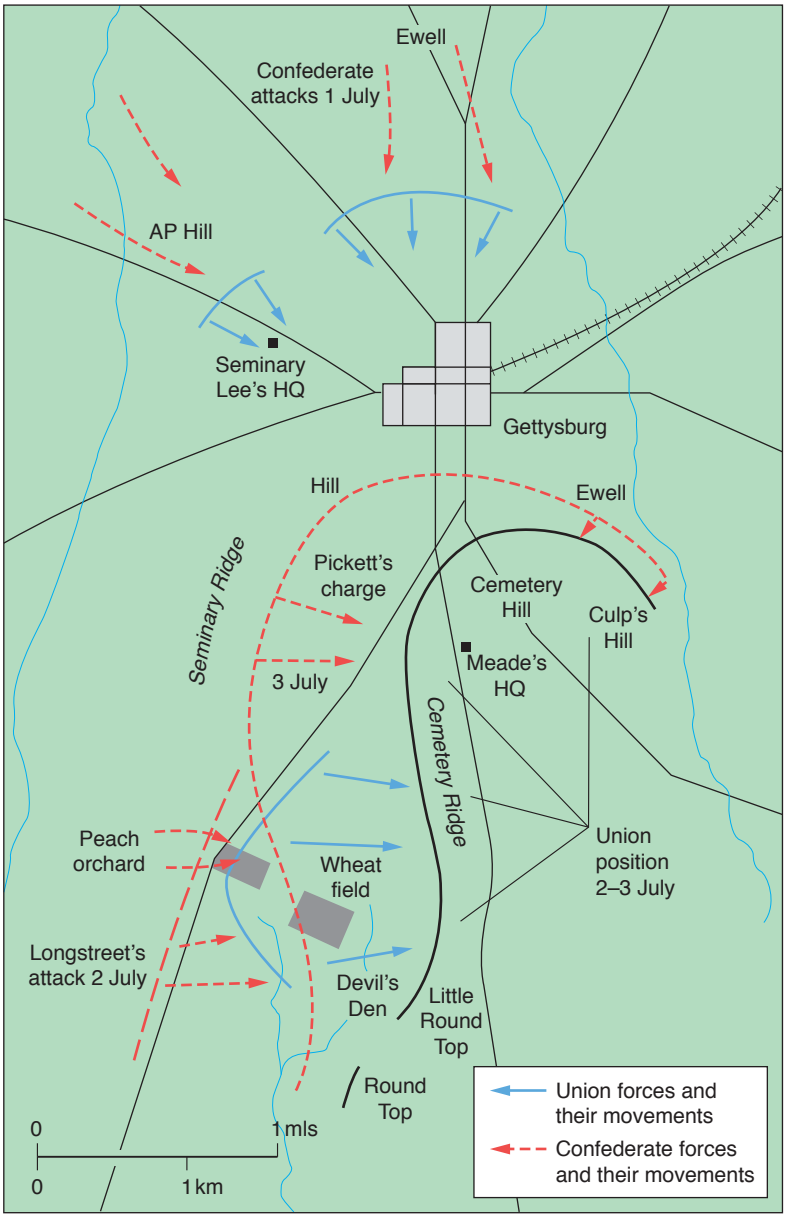
Lee now showed himself at his most brilliant. Leaving General Early with 10,000 men to hold Sedgewick, Lee led 50,000 Confederates to meet Hooker. On 2 May, he further divided his army, sending Jackson with 28,000 men to attack Hooker's right flank. Jackson attacked just before dusk, driving Union troops back in confusion. Nightfall brought an end to the fighting – and to Jackson, shot in the arm by his own men while inspecting the battlefield. Jackson's arm was amputated but he contracted pneumonia and died on 10 May.

Jackson's efforts at least ensured a Confederate victory. Injured (by falling masonry) and bemused by events, Hooker retreated. This enabled Lee to send men to head off Sedgewick, who had driven Early from Fredericksburg. Sedgewick retreated with the rest of Hooker's army. Lee had achieved what many see as his most impressive victory. With far fewer men, Lee had inflicted greater casualties on the enemy: Hooker's losses were 17,000, Lee's 13,000. Although Jackson's death cast a long shadow, Confederate morale was sky high.

The battle of Gettysburg

Davis's advisers were split on how best to use the Army of Northern Virginia. Some favoured sending forces to relieve Vicksburg. Others thought it better to reinforce Bragg and launch a major advance through Tennessee and Kentucky. Convinced that only victories on Northern soil would force Lincoln to accept Confederate independence, Lee insisted on an invasion of Pennsylvania. This would ease pressure on Virginia and be a severe blow to Union morale. Lee got his way and in mid-June began his advance northwards.

Hooker tried to follow Lee but with little idea of where he was heading. On 28 June, Lincoln replaced Hooker with General Meade – an unpretentious, competent soldier. On 1 July, rebel soldiers, looking for shoes, stumbled across Union troops at Gettysburg. Lee and Meade ordered their forces to converge on the small town. Thus began the greatest battle ever fought on the American continent.



The Battle of Gettysburg, 1–3 July 1863

The battle

The first day of the battle – 1 July – belonged to the Confederacy. Union troops retreated to Culp's Hill and Cemetery Hill. If the rebels had pushed home their attack they might have triumphed.

Lee considered his options. Meade's army of 85,000 men was strongly positioned. Rather than attack, Longstreet favoured swinging around the Union left flank and finding a strong position in Meade's rear so that the rebels were between the Army of the Potomac and Washington. Longstreet

believed that Meade would then be forced to attack, and it was better to fight a defensive rather than an offensive action. Lee, aware of his army's supply problems, would have none of this. 'I am going to whip them here', he declared, 'or they are going to whip me.'

On 2 July, serious fighting did not start until well into the afternoon when Longstreet attacked the Union left. The Confederates had some success against Union troops who had unwisely advanced into the Peach Orchard. They also nearly captured the strategically important Little Round Top on the extreme left of the Union position. The fighting on Little Round Top was symbolic of rebel fortunes on 2 July. Lee's men came close, but not close enough, to victory. They failed to break through in the centre and had no more success on the Union right. The day ended in a stalemate.

On 3 July, Lee launched his main attack on the Union centre. A total of 15,000 men, led by General Pickett, advanced up Cemetery Ridge. The charge was a disaster. Rebel troops were mown down by Union fire. In less than one hour the Confederates suffered 6,500 casualties.

Lee had been beaten. In three days he had lost 28,000 men – one-third of his command. (The Union army lost 23,000 men.) Lee retreated back to Virginia. He accepted full responsibility for Gettysburg: 'The army did all it could. I fear I required of it impossibilities.' He offered his resignation. Davis refused to accept it.

The results of Gettysburg

Gettysburg was a serious defeat for the Confederacy. The myth of Lee's invincibility had been broken and this in itself was a huge morale booster for the Union. After Gettysburg Lee was never again strong enough to launch a major invasion of the North. But Gettysburg was probably not the main turning point of the war:

- If Lee had won (and afterwards he maintained that he would have triumphed if he had had Stonewall Jackson), he could not have held a single Northern city for any length of time and would ultimately have had to retreat.
- Defeat at Gettysburg did not make Confederate defeat inevitable. The battle was not decisive because Meade, despite Lincoln's urgings, was unable to follow up his victory.

For the rest of 1863 there were few major engagements in Virginia.

The Gettysburg Address

On 19 November 1863, President Lincoln travelled to Gettysburg to witness the opening of a special cemetery for those who had died at the battle. The main speaker at the dedication was Edward Everett, one of the most famous orators of the day. Lincoln was asked to add only 'a few appropriate remarks'. Everett spoke for nearly two hours. Lincoln's speech, by contrast, was a mere 272 words.

SOURCE A

***Lincoln's Gettysburg Address*, 19 November 1863.**

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation or any nation so conceived and so dedicated can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting-place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead who struggled here have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here.

It is for us the living rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us – that from those honoured dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion – that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain, that this nation under God shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth.

Read Source A. According to Lincoln, what were the aims for which Northerners were fighting and dying? ?

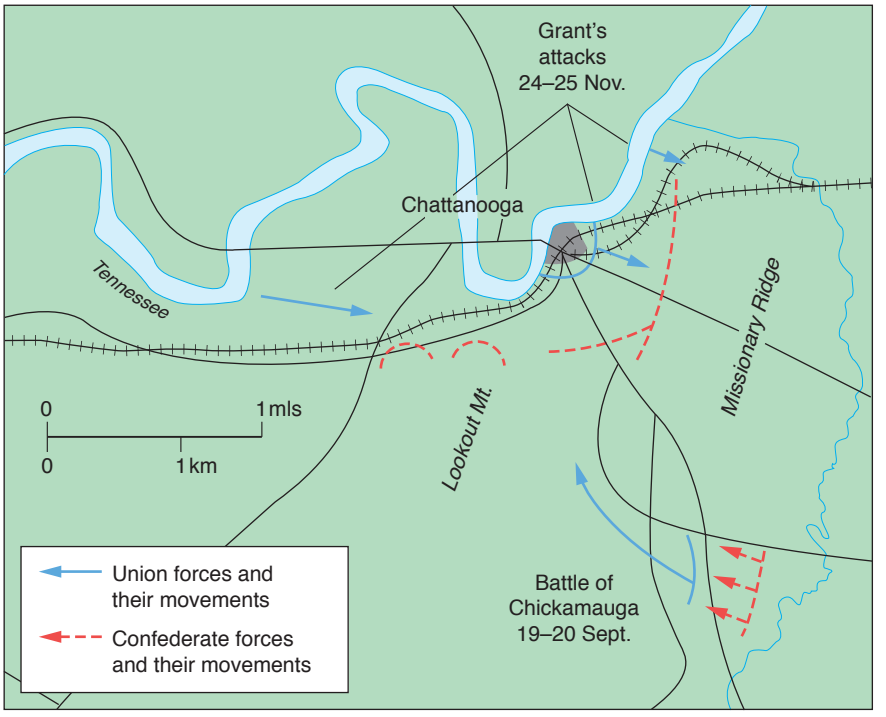
The capture of Vicksburg

In April 1863, Grant, still seeking a way of capturing Vicksburg, determined to gamble. Marching his army down the west side of the Mississippi, he relied upon Admiral Porter's ironclad fleet sailing past Vicksburg. This was achieved on the night of 16–17 April. Two weeks later, Grant's army was ferried across the Mississippi.

The ensuing campaign was brilliant. Aware that he would be outnumbered if the Confederate forces in the vicinity (Pemberton with 30,000 men at Vicksburg and Johnston with 25,000 men near Jackson) united, Grant's aim was to defeat the two rebel armies separately. Largely ignoring his line of communications, he cut inland. In three weeks he won several battles, defeating Johnston and forcing Pemberton to retreat into Vicksburg. After failing to storm the defences, Grant besieged the town. On 4 July, 30,000 Confederate troops in Vicksburg surrendered. The capture of Port Hudson five days later meant that the Confederacy was cut in two.



The Vicksburg Campaign 1863



Chickamauga and Chattanooga, September–November 1863

Chattanooga

Lincoln, anxious to press the Confederacy on all fronts, demanded more decisive action from Rosecrans in Tennessee. Threatened with dismissal, Rosecrans advanced in June, forcing Bragg to retreat to Chattanooga. Unable to hold the town, Bragg withdrew to Chickamauga, where he was reinforced by 12,000 men from the Army of Northern Virginia, led by Longstreet.

The battle of Chickamauga

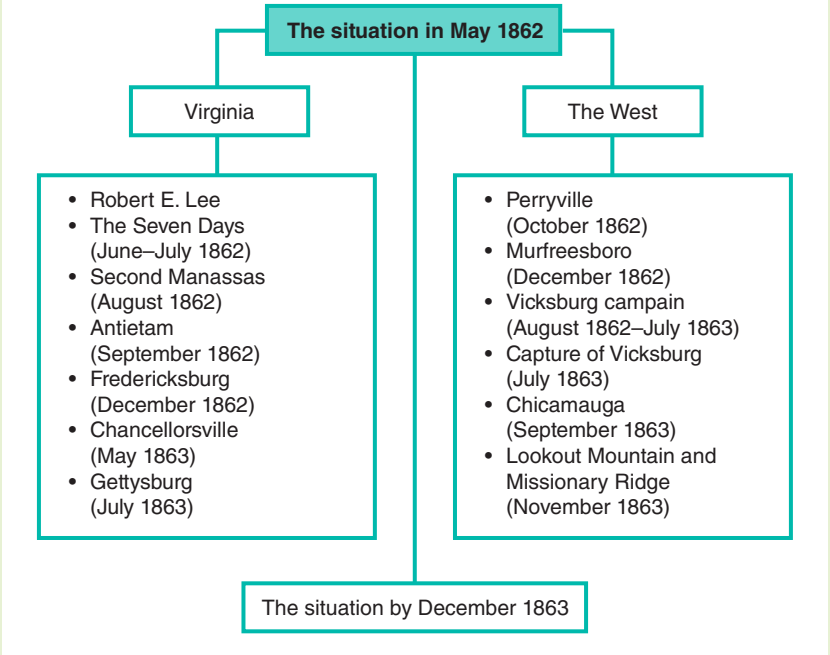
In September, Rosecrans advanced. On 19–20 September, Bragg gave battle at Chickamauga – the only major battle in the war in which the rebels outnumbered Union forces. Bragg came close to winning a decisive victory. Only a brave rearguard action by General Thomas prevented a rout, enabling the Union army to retreat to Chattanooga. The battle of Chickamauga cost Bragg 18,500 casualties while Rosecrans lost 16,500.

Grant takes command

Bragg now besieged Chattanooga. The Union army was so short of food it seemed it might be forced to surrender. Lincoln gave Grant command of all the Union's western forces. Grant acted swiftly, establishing a supply line to Chattanooga.

Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge

On 24 November, Union troops stormed Lookout Mountain. The next day Grant's men seized Missionary Ridge. Rebel forces retreated in disarray and Bragg was relieved of his command.



SUMMARY DIAGRAM

The war 1862–3

3 Union victory

Key question: *Why were Union armies so successful in 1864–5?*

The defeats at Gettysburg, Vicksburg and Chattanooga were severe blows to Southern morale. By December 1863, Union forces were preparing to invade Georgia. Large areas of Arkansas, Tennessee and Louisiana were under Union control. Nevertheless, the South was far from beaten. Out west, the Union faced the problem of long supply lines. In the east, the Confederacy still had Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia. If Lee could continue to inflict heavy casualties on the Union, there was every chance that the Northern electorate might oust Lincoln in the 1864 election and vote in a peace candidate.

How great a general was Grant?

The situation in 1864

In March 1864, Lincoln appointed Grant US General-in-Chief of all the Union armies. He immediately came east to supervise the effort to destroy Lee. Sherman took over command in the west.

'Simultaneous movement all along the line'

Determined to make use of the Union's greater manpower, Grant planned for a 'simultaneous movement all along the line':

- The 115,000-strong Army of the Potomac would attack Lee.
- Sherman's western army would capture Atlanta and then 'get into the interior of the enemy's country … inflicting all the damage you can'.
- Led by General Banks, 30,000 men in Louisiana were to capture Mobile.
- Butler's 30,000-strong army at Yorktown was to threaten Richmond.
- Sigel, with 26,000 men, was to occupy the Shenandoah Valley.

Lincoln approved of this strategy; it was the one he had advocated from the start.

Confederate and Union problems

The Confederacy by 1864 had to scrape the bottom of its manpower barrel. Men between the ages of 17 and 50 were now liable for conscription. While rebel forces were less than half those of the Union, the morale of the Army of North Virginia remained high and General Joe Johnston, reappointed to command the Army of Tennessee, improved Confederate morale in the west.

Although they would be outnumbered in the coming campaigns, at least most rebel soldiers were veterans. Many experienced Union troops, on the other hand, were due to go home in 1864 when the three-year enlistment period ended. This would seriously weaken the Union army. Rather than force the veterans to re-enlist, the Union offered them $400 and 30 days'

leave. Some 136,000 men, scenting victory, re-enlisted; 100,000 decided not to do so.

Grant's plan unfolds

Grant's strategy in 1864 did not go according to plan:

- Banks was defeated in the Red River area.
- Butler failed to exert pressure on Richmond.
- Union forces in the Shenandoah were defeated. In July, a 10,000-strong rebel force pushed up the valley and reached Washington's suburbs, forcing Grant to send reinforcements to defend the capital.

The Wilderness campaign

The Army of the Potomac had mixed success. With a two-to-one superiority in manpower, Grant hoped to manoeuvre Lee into an open-field combat. Lee's strategy was straightforward: keep Grant from Richmond, force him to attack fortified positions, and make the cost of trying to defeat the Confederacy so high that Northerners would refuse to pay the price and vote out Lincoln in November.

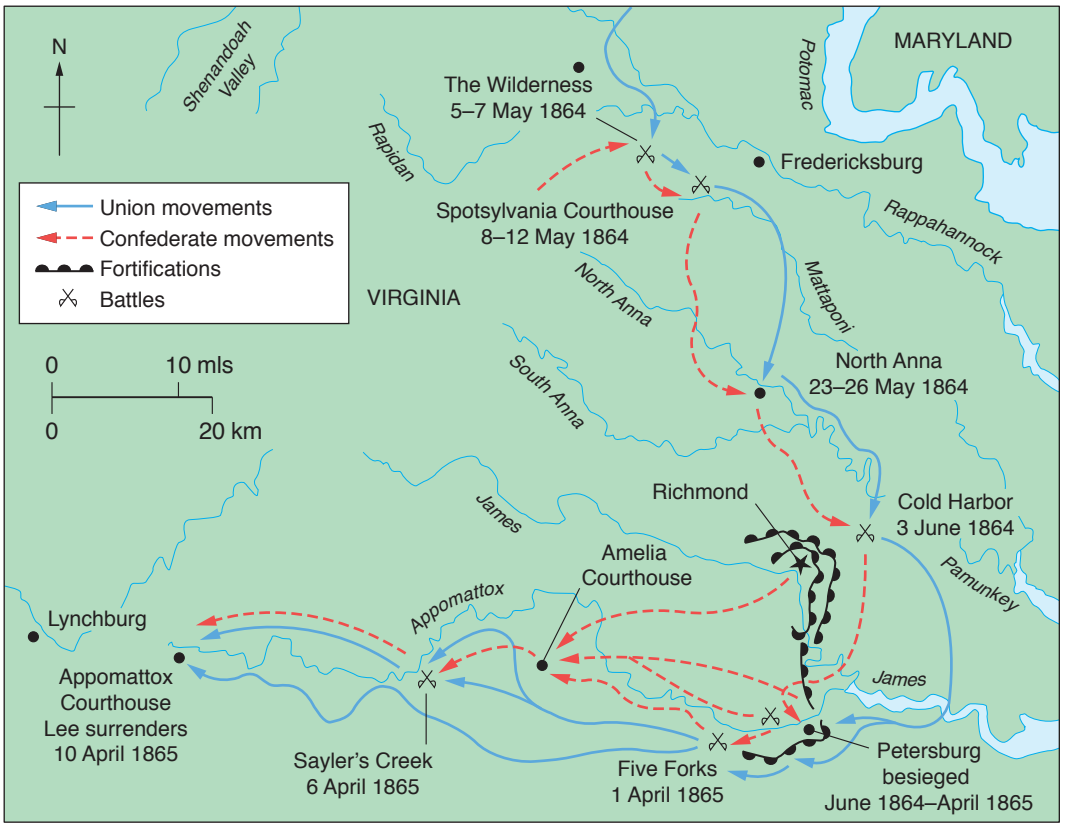
In May, Grant crossed the Rapidan River, threatening to slip round Lee's flank. The bloodiest six weeks of the war now began. On 5–6 May, Union and rebel forces met again in the same Wilderness area that had foiled Hooker one year earlier (see page 174). The Union army suffered 18,000 casualties in confused, ferocious fighting; twice the losses sustained by Lee. But Grant (unlike Hooker in 1863) did not retreat. Instead, he edged southwards, trying to get between Lee and Richmond.

For the next month, the opposing armies were never out of contact. Grant's probings were foiled by Lee's skilful defence. On 3 June at Cold Harbor Grant lost 7,000 men in just over one hour; Lee lost 1,500. In the first 30 days of his offensive, Grant lost 50,000 men. Northern Democrats denounced him as 'Butcher' Grant. But the slogging match had just as great an impact on the Army of Northern Virginia. By June, Lee was desperately short of men and many of his best officers were dead or wounded.

The siege of Petersburg

Why was the siege of Petersburg so important?

On 12 June, Union forces crossed the James River, threatening Richmond from the south and almost capturing Petersburg, a crucial railway junction. Inspired resistance from a small force led by Beauregard saved the day for the Confederacy. Lee, aware that the loss of Petersburg would result in the loss of Richmond, was forced to defend the town. Both sides dug trenches and the siege of Petersburg began. On 30 July, the Union army tried to blast a way through the defences, exploding tons of gunpowder below the rebel lines. In the fighting which followed, Union forces got bogged down in the crater created by the explosion and suffered 4,500 casualties. The Confederates hung on.



The Virginian Campaign 1864–5

KEY TERM

War of attrition
A conflict where each side tries to wear down the strength, morale and/or resources of the enemy.

Although Grant had not yet defeated Lee, he had at least forced him onto the defensive and ensured that he was no longer able to fight the type of war at which he excelled – a war of manoeuvre. Both Grant and Lee knew that a **war of attrition** favoured the Union.

The Shenandoah Valley

In the autumn of 1864, the Confederacy suffered serious setbacks in the Shenandoah. General Sheridan, the new Union commander, chased the Confederates up the valley, winning battles at Winchester and at Cedar Creek.

How important was the Atlanta campaign?

The Atlanta campaign

In May 1864, Sherman, with 100,000 men, left Chattanooga and headed towards Atlanta, state capital of Georgia and an important industrial and rail centre. His Confederate opponent, General Johnston, commanded some 70,000 men. Rather than go on the offensive (as Davis wanted), Johnston retreated, taking up strong positions and hoping that Sherman would launch

costly frontal offensives. Instead, Sherman repeatedly turned Johnston's flank, forcing him back. Sherman did try one frontal attack at Kennesaw Mountain in June but this was a disaster. Thereafter, he returned to his flanking manoeuvres.

Johnston seemed impervious to the rising discontent over his continuous retreat. By July, Union forces had reached the outskirts of Atlanta. Davis now replaced Johnston with 33-year-old John Bell Hood. Hood, who had lost an arm at Gettysburg and a leg at Chickamauga, was a brave fighter but had little skill as a commander. 'All lion, none of the fox', was Lee's view, a view that Hood was now to confirm. A series of attacks on Union lines resulted in the loss of 20,000 Confederates. At the end of August, Hood was forced to abandon Atlanta. Its capture was an important boost to Northern morale.

The 1864 election

Why did Lincoln win the 1864 election?

The Confederacy's last (and best) hope was that Lincoln would be defeated in the 1864 election. In August, with the war going badly, Lincoln said, 'I am going to be beaten and unless some great change takes place, badly beaten.' The Democrat convention, hoping to capitalise on Northern war weariness, called for a negotiated peace, condemned Lincoln's arbitrary measures and pledged to preserve states' rights. However, General McClellan, the Democrat presidential candidate, would not agree to the peace platform. This meant that his party was in something of a muddle.

Lincoln was not popular with all Republicans. Many wanted to nominate General Grant as presidential candidate but he made it clear that he would not stand. Treasury Secretary Chase had presidential ambitions but failed to mount a challenge. John C. Frémont, the 1856 Republican candidate, created his own political party, the Radical Democrats, and threatened to split the Republican vote.

Lincoln was easily renominated at the Republican convention in June. Andrew Johnson of Tennessee was chosen as his running mate. The fact that Johnson was both a Southerner and a War Democrat seemed to strengthen the Republican ticket. (In 1864, the Republicans campaigned as the National Union Party.) The Republican platform endorsed a policy of unconditional surrender and called for the 'utter and complete extirpation of slavery' by means of a constitutional amendment.

In August, wide cracks appeared between the President and his party over reconstruction policy (see pages 209–11). But with the election only a few weeks away, Republicans rallied round Lincoln.

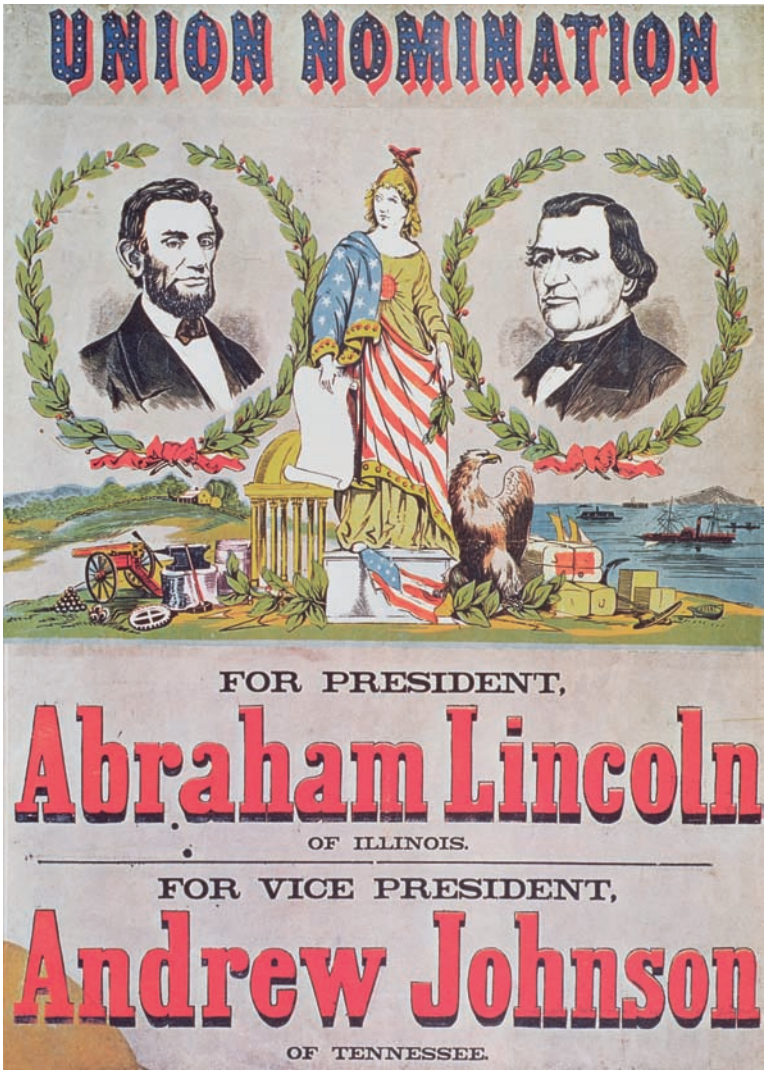
In September, the war turned in Lincoln's favour:

- Admiral Farragut won an important naval victory at Mobile.
- Atlanta fell.
- Sheridan was successful in the Shenandoah.

? What does Source B tell us about Republican propaganda?

SOURCE B

Union poster, 1864.



Frémont now withdrew from the race and the election became a straight contest between Lincoln and McClellan. Republicans ridiculed McClellan's military record and did their best to depict the Democrats as at best unpatriotic defeatists and at worst traitors.

The election results

In November, Lincoln won 2,213,645 popular votes (55 per cent of the total) and 212 electoral college votes to McClellan's 1,802,237 votes (45 per cent) and 21 electoral votes. The Republicans increased their majorities in both

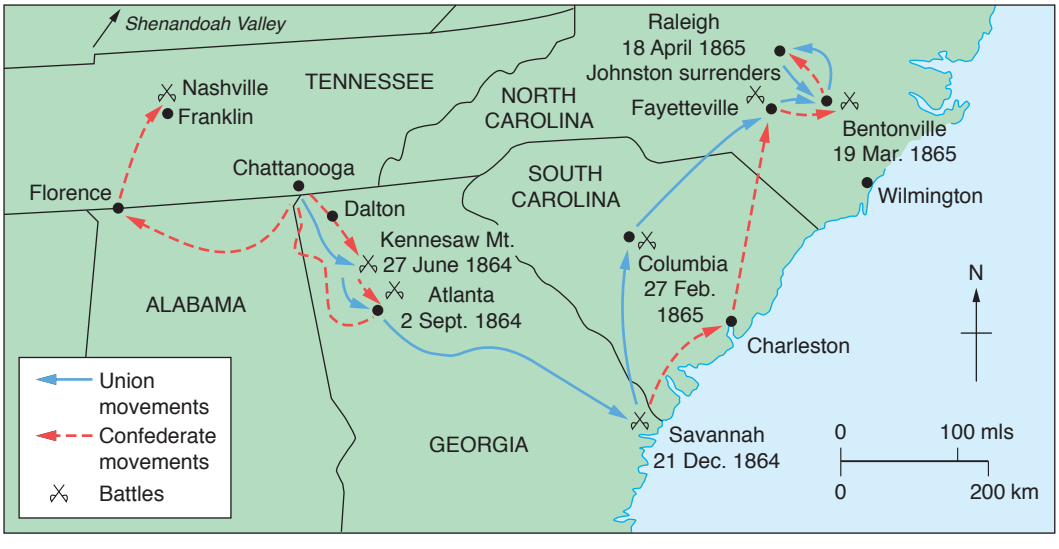
houses of Congress. Native-born, Protestant Americans remained loyal to Lincoln. Particularly remarkable was the backing he received from Union troops. Most states enacted provision for soldiers to vote in the field. Those states which blocked this measure failed to stop the soldiers from voting. The War Department allowed whole regiments to return home to vote. Lincoln received 78 per cent of the soldier vote. The election was really a referendum on whether the North should continue fighting. Lincoln's success was the death knell of the Confederacy.

The end of the Confederacy

Why did the Confederacy collapse in 1865?

Marching through Georgia

In the autumn of 1864, Sherman divided his army. Leaving Thomas to watch Hood, Sherman set off from Atlanta in mid-November with 62,000 men on a march through Georgia to Savannah on the coast. Cutting adrift from supply lines, Sherman's aim was to demoralise the South, destroying both its capacity and its will to fight. Convinced his men could live off the land, he was aware that the Confederacy was not in a position to mount effective opposition. His march – intended to make Georgia 'howl' – went much to plan. Leaving a swathe of destruction, Union forces reached and captured Savannah in mid-December. The 285-mile march inflicted some $100 million damage on Georgia, crippled much of the state's railway network, and gave a lie to the Confederate government's promise of protection for its people.



Sherman's march through the South 1864–5

William Tecumseh Sherman, 1820–91

Born in Lancaster, Ohio and the foster son of the prominent Whig Party politician Thomas Ewing, Sherman graduated from West Point in 1840. After fighting in Florida in the Second Seminole War, he served in California in the Mexican War. In 1853, he resigned his commission to become manager of a San Francisco bank. He experienced a series of business failures in California, New York and Kansas. In 1859 he was appointed superintendent of the Louisiana Military Seminary. Returning to the US army in 1861 (and despite a mild nervous breakdown in late 1861), he participated in many of the Civil War's main battles and campaigns – Bull Run, Shiloh, Vicksburg and Chattanooga. Given command of the Western Theatre in March 1864, he captured Atlanta and went on to march through Georgia to Savannah. In 1865 his men conducted marches of destruction through the Carolinas to Petersburg. In May 1865 he negotiated the controversially mild surrender agreement with Confederate General Joe E. Johnston.

During Reconstruction, he was one of the South's leading Northern supporters. In 1869 he became Commanding General of the Army, a post he held until 1884. He was thus responsible for US conduct in the Indian Wars. In 1875 he published his controversial *Memoirs*.

Sherman was regarded by military historian Basil Liddell Hart as 'the first modern general'. This was largely because Hart thought he conducted 'total war' in his march through Georgia and the Carolinas in 1864–5. Southern whites long denounced his campaign as one of particular devastation and brutality. However, Sherman was by no means the only soldier in modern times to use 'scorched earth' tactics.



Nor was his campaign particularly cruel. While his army destroyed huge amounts of property, very few Southerners lost their lives. Sherman himself downplayed his role, usually saying he was simply carrying out orders as best he could to end the war in the shortest time possible.

Sherman's views on war

His reply to the Atlanta City Council in 1864 who complained of hardships resulting from his policies:

'You cannot qualify war in harsher terms than I will. War is cruelty and you cannot refine it; and those who brought war into our country deserve all the curses and maledictions a people can pour out. I know I had no hand in making this war, and I know I will make more sacrifices today than any of you to secure peace. But you cannot have peace and a division of our country.'

A personal letter, written by Sherman in May 1865:

'I confess, without shame, I am sick and tired of fighting – its glory is all moonshine; even success the most brilliant is over dead and mangled bodies with the anguish and lamentations of distant families, appealing to me for sons, husbands and fathers … tis only those who have never heard a shot, never heard the shriek and groans of the wounded and lacerated … that cry aloud for more blood, more vengeance, more desolation.'

Sherman in 1875:

'My aim then was to whip the rebels, to humble their pride, to follow them to their inmost recesses, and to make them fear and dread us.'

Franklin and Nashville

Instead of trying to stop Sherman, Hood invaded Tennessee. His scheme – to defeat Thomas, reconquer Kentucky and then march to help Lee – came to nothing. On 30 November, Hood ordered an assault on Union forces at Franklin. His losses were three times those of the enemy. The Union army now pulled back to Nashville, which Hood 'besieged' for two weeks. Given that Hood had 23,000 men and Thomas 50,000, it was hard to know who was besieging whom. Despite pressure from Lincoln, Thomas (one of the Union's unsung heroes) delayed his counter-attack until he was fully

prepared. When he struck on 15–16 December he won the most complete victory of the war. The battle of Nashville destroyed Hood's Army of Tennessee. In January 1865, Hood resigned what little was left of his command.

The situation in late 1864

In his December 1864 address to Congress, Lincoln spoke confidently of victory. Union resources, he said, were unexhausted and inexhaustible; its military and naval forces were larger than ever, and its economy was prospering. The Confederacy's situation, by contrast, was desperate. Its western armies were in tatters and Lee's Army of Northern Virginia suffered from mass desertions as troops received despairing letters from home.

Peace attempts

In February, Confederate Vice-President Stephens (with Davis's approval) met Lincoln to see if it was possible to arrange peace. The talks were unproductive. Lincoln was not prepared to compromise on either slavery or disunion and Davis was not prepared to surrender.

Lee's problems

Lee, now given overall command of all that was left of the Confederate armies, asked for regiments of slaves to be raised to fight for the Southern cause. In March, the Confederate Congress approved a measure it had previously opposed. It came too late to have any effect. The Confederacy was falling apart. In January 1865, Wilmington, the last major Confederate port, was closed with the Union capture of Fort Fisher. In February, Sherman headed north. South Carolina suffered worse deprivation than Georgia. Lee gave Johnston the thankless task of trying to resist Sherman's remorseless march towards Richmond.

The fall of Petersburg and Richmond

Grant did not really need Sherman's army. By March, rebel trench lines extended 35 miles around Petersburg and Lee had fewer than 50,000 half-starved troops to man them. Grant had 125,000 men, not counting Sheridan approaching from the north and Sherman approaching from the south. On 1 April, Sheridan won a decisive victory at Five Forks. The following day Grant ordered a full-scale assault and the Union army broke through Lee's lines. Lee had no option but to abandon both Petersburg and Richmond. On 3 April, Lincoln visited Richmond. He was mobbed by ex-slaves who greeted him as a messiah.

Confederate surrender

Lee headed westwards, hoping to join up with Johnston's forces. Instead, he found himself surrounded by Union forces. On 6 April, he fought his last battle at Sayler's Creek. He achieved nothing, except the loss of 8,000 men. On 9 April, he realised, 'There is nothing left for me to do but to go and see General Grant and I would rather die a thousand deaths.'

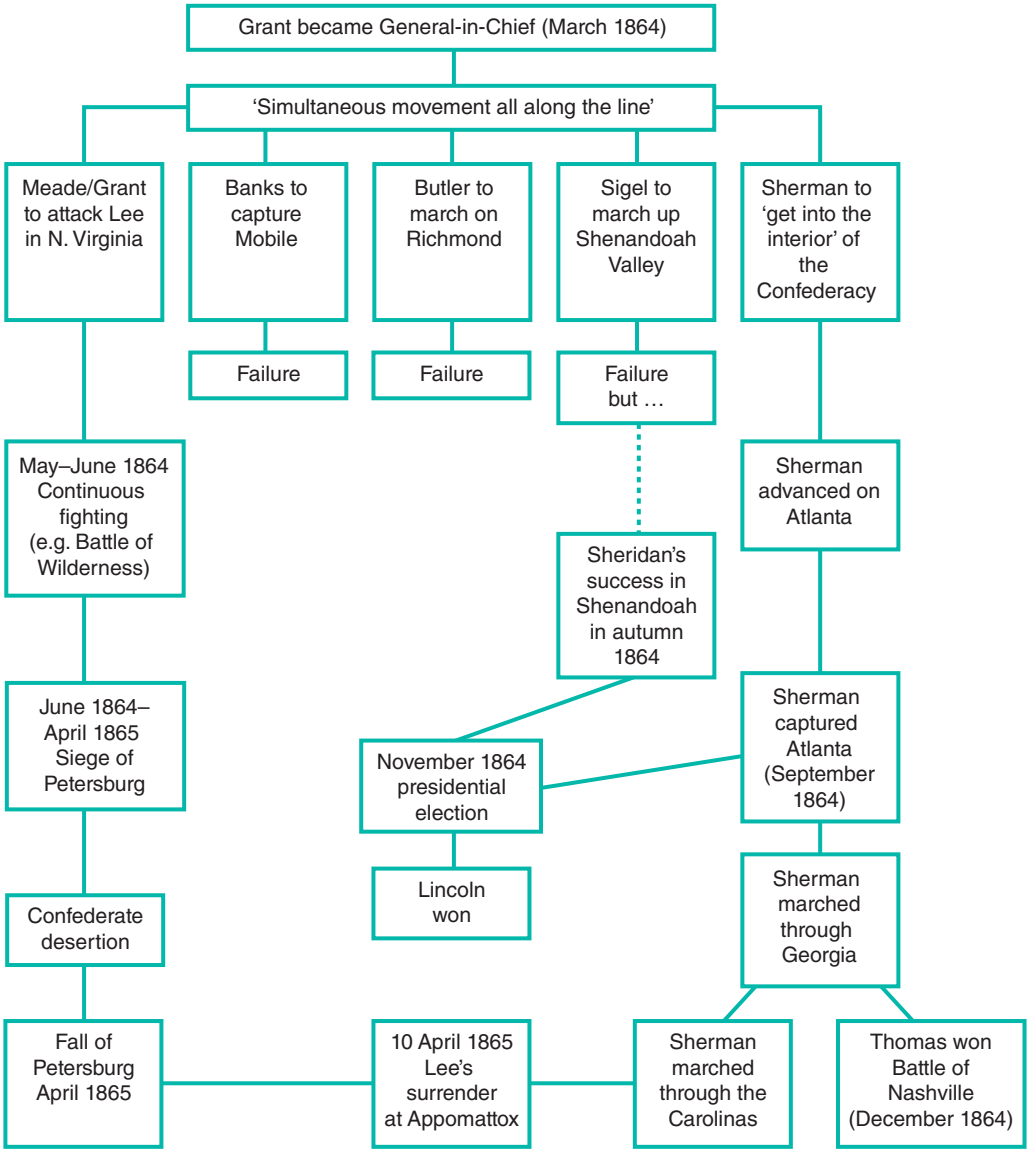
Lee and Grant met at Appomattox Court House on 10 April. Lee surrendered. Grant was magnanimous in victory, allowing Confederate troops to keep their side arms and horses and giving the hungry rebels Union army rations. Lee, meeting his troops for the last time, said, 'Boys, I have done the best I could for you. Go home now, and if you make as good citizens as you have soldiers, you will do well, and I shall always be proud of you.'

Lee's surrender was the effective end of the war. Davis, fleeing southwards, exhorted the Confederacy to fight on. But most Southerners, heeding Lee's advice, showed no interest in a guerrilla war. On 16 April, Johnston surrendered to Sherman. Davis was captured in Georgia on 10 May. The last skirmish, fought in Texas on 13 May, was ironically a rebel victory.

Returning home

For the victorious Union soldiers, one final mission remained before they quit the army and returned to their homes. The new President Andrew Johnson ordered the Union armies to stage a grand review through Washington DC. It required two full days (23–24 May 1865) for some 150,000 men of the Army of the Potomac and the Army of Georgia and Tennessee to march past the cheering crowds lining Pennsylvania Avenue. One private wrote later: 'I felt that the pleasures of the day fully repaid me for all the hardships, privations, dangers and suffering that I had endured during all those years of strife and carnage.'

There was no such celebration for Confederate soldiers who drifted home through the spring and summer of 1865. Given Sherman's 'hard war' policy, some had no homes to which to return. Returning Confederate soldiers thus faced bleak prospects – ravaged cities, devastated land, economic and financial ruin. A South Carolina planter, facing the rebuilding that lay ahead, said: 'We are discouraged. We have nothing left to begin anew with. I never did a day's work in my life and don't know how to begin.'



SUMMARY DIAGRAM

Union victory

4 Britain and the Civil War

Key question: *Why did Britain not intervene in the war?*

Jefferson Davis, aware that alliance with Britain was the Confederacy's best hope of success, did his best to secure British support. In May 1861, Confederate commissioners were sent to London and gained an informal interview with British Foreign Secretary Lord John Russell. The Russian minister in Washington was convinced that, 'England will take advantage of the first opportunity to recognise the seceded states.'

Why was British opinion divided?

Britain's attitude to the war

Sympathy for the Confederacy

Prime Minister Lord Palmerston and Foreign Secretary Russell knew that there were good reasons for supporting the Confederacy:

- Britain's immediate and long-term self-interest might well be served by the break-up of the USA.
- An independent Confederacy would have strong economic links with Britain, providing raw cotton in return for manufactured goods.
- Cotton was an issue of immediate concern. In order to prevent economic hardship at home, it might be necessary for Britain to break the Union blockade to acquire Southern cotton.
- Many Britons sympathised with the Confederacy and thought the North had no right to force people back into an unpopular Union.
- Given that four slave states remained in the Union, slavery did not seem to be a crucial issue. Indeed, Lincoln's administration insisted for most of 1861–2 that the war was not a crusade to abolish slavery. Given that most Britons opposed slavery, this made it easier for influential newspapers, such as *The Times*, to support the Confederacy.

Sympathy for the Union

However, there were also good reasons for Britain not getting involved in the war:

- Conflict with the Union might result in the loss of Canada.
- War would certainly result in the loss of valuable markets and investments in the North.
- British opinion was far from united. Aware that slavery lay at the heart of the conflict, many Britons supported the Union.
- The Crimean War (1854–6) had indicated the difficulties of fighting a war thousands of miles from home.

Not surprisingly, Palmerston believed that Britain's best policy was neutrality.

British neutrality

One immediate problem was whether Britain should recognise the Confederacy as a sovereign state. Lincoln's administration made it clear that the conflict was a rebellion. Thus, recognition of the Confederacy was tantamount to a declaration of war against the USA. However, in legal terms the situation was confused because Lincoln had proclaimed a blockade against the Confederacy. A blockade was an instrument of war. If a state of war existed, Britain could make a reasonable case for recognising the Confederacy.

In May 1861, Palmerston's government adopted a compromise position:

- It declared its neutrality.
- It recognised the Union blockade.
- It did not recognise the Confederacy as a sovereign state.
- It accepted the Confederacy's **belligerent** status. Under international law belligerents had the right to contract loans and purchase arms in neutral nations. However, Britain's neutrality proclamation prevented the Confederacy fitting out its warships in Britain.

Having declared itself neutral, Britain made every effort to remain so.

KEY TERM

Belligerent A combatant, recognised in British law, as legally waging war.

Confederate and Union diplomacy

How effective was Confederate and Union diplomacy?

The cotton embargo

In 1861, Southerners believed that Britain would be forced to break the Union blockade because of its need for cotton. In order to tighten the screw, an unofficial cotton embargo was introduced. The *Charleston Mercury* declared in June 1861: 'the cards are in our hands and we intend to play them out to the bankruptcy of every cotton factory in Great Britain and France or the acknowledgement of our independence'.

Unfortunately for the Confederacy, the embargo ploy failed. European warehouses were full of cotton purchased in 1859–60, and so there was no immediate shortage. The Confederate cotton strategy thus backfired. Southerners failed to sell their most valuable commodity at a time when the blockade was at its least effective. Moreover, the embargo angered Europeans: 'To intervene on behalf of the South because they have kept cotton from us would be ignominious beyond measure', declared Russell.

Nevertheless, the British government did consider breaking the blockade. 'We cannot allow some millions of our people to perish to please the Northern states', said Palmerston. British and French diplomats discussed the possibility of joint action to lift the blockade. In the event, the talks were not followed by action.

The *Trent* affair

In November 1861 James Mason and John Slidell, Confederate commissioners to Britain and France, respectively, left Cuba for Europe in the

Trent, a British steamer. Soon after leaving Havana, the *Trent* was stopped by Captain Wilkes, commanding the USS *San Jacinto*. Wilkes forcibly removed Mason and Slidell from the British ship.

This action created a wave of anger in Britain: 'You may stand for this but damned if I will', Palmerston told his cabinet. Russell demanded that Mason and Slidell should be released and the US must make a public apology. To back up the threat, the British fleet prepared for action and soldiers were sent to Canada. Britain also stopped the export of essential war materials to the Union.

The *Trent* affair posed a serious dilemma for Lincoln. While there was a danger of war if his government did not satisfy Britain, Union opinion would be outraged if he cravenly surrendered. Wilkes had become something of a national hero, so much so that the House of Representatives had passed a resolution praising his action. A compromise was eventually found. The US government, while not apologising for Wilkes's action, admitted that he had committed an illegal act and freed Mason and Slidell.

British mediation?

The closest the Confederacy came to getting British recognition was in the autumn of 1862 after its triumph at Second Manassas (see pages 170–1). French Emperor Napoleon III's proposal that Britain and France should attempt to mediate in the conflict was seriously considered by Palmerston and Russell. Given that mediation meant recognition of the Confederacy, Britain and France might easily have found themselves at war with the Union. However, the failure of Lee's Maryland invasion (see page 172) convinced Palmerston that it would be unwise to intervene.

Even after Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation (see page 205), some members of Palmerston's cabinet still wanted to take action. In October 1862, Chancellor of the Exchequer William Gladstone claimed that 'Jefferson Davis and other leaders have made an army, and are making, it appears, a navy, and they have made what is more than either, they have made a nation.' Supported by Gladstone, Russell prepared a memorandum arguing for mediation. Palmerston rejected the idea.

The cotton famine

The full impact of the cotton shortage hit Britain over the winter of 1862–3 and caused high unemployment in Lancashire. However, given that the British economy was generally prospering, there was limited pressure on the government to take action. During 1863, the situation in Lancashire improved as a result of imports of cotton from India, China and Egypt.

Commerce raiders

Although denied British recognition, the Confederacy received valuable aid from Britain. Confederate agents worked effectively to secure British military supplies. In particular, British shipbuilders built vessels for a variety of Confederate purposes. The majority were employed in running cargoes through the blockade. The Confederacy also purchased commerce raiders. While British law forbad the construction of warships for a belligerent power, Confederate agents got round this by purchasing unarmed ships and then adding the guns elsewhere.

Confederate commerce raiders caused considerable damage to Union merchant shipping. The CSS *Alabama*, for example, took 64 Union ships before finally being sunk off Brest. Altogether the North lost some 200 ships. While scarcely crippling trade, the raiders were a nuisance, driving Union shipping insurance rates to astonishing heights. Consequently, more and more trade was transferred to neutral ships, which were not attacked by Confederate raiders.

The Laird rams

The last serious crisis between the Union and Britain came during the summer of 1863. Lincoln's government was aware that the Laird Brothers shipbuilders were building two ironclad ships for the Confederacy. These boats – the **Laird rams** – would be the strongest ships afloat. Charles Adams, the US Minister in Britain, threatened war if the boats were sold to the Confederacy. The British government eventually bought the rams itself and the crisis fizzled out.

KEY TERM

Laird rams The distinguishing feature of these vessels was an iron ram, projecting from the bow, which enabled them to sink an enemy by smashing its hull.

France and Russia

Emperor Napoleon III of France was keener to recognise the Confederacy and intervene on its side than Britain. He had imperial ambitions in Mexico, which were unlikely to be realised if the Union triumphed. Moreover, the French cotton industry was also severely affected by the Union blockade. However, Napoleon III was not prepared to take on the Union without British support, which he could not get.

Had Britain and France intervened in the war, it is conceivable that Russia, anxious to avenge its defeat in the Crimean War, might have supported the Union. The balance of world power was seen by Russia to depend on the preservation of the Union. A strong United States was regarded as an insurance against British aggression. In the autumn of 1863 the Russian fleet sailed into New York Harbor, wintering in US ports over the winter of 1863–4. To Northerners, it seemed as though the Russians were showing their support for the Union. In reality, however, it was Tsar Alexander II's fear

of war with Britain and France, who were opposed to his suppression of a rebellion in Poland, rather than his sympathy for the Union cause, that had prompted him to send his fleet to safety in US ports.

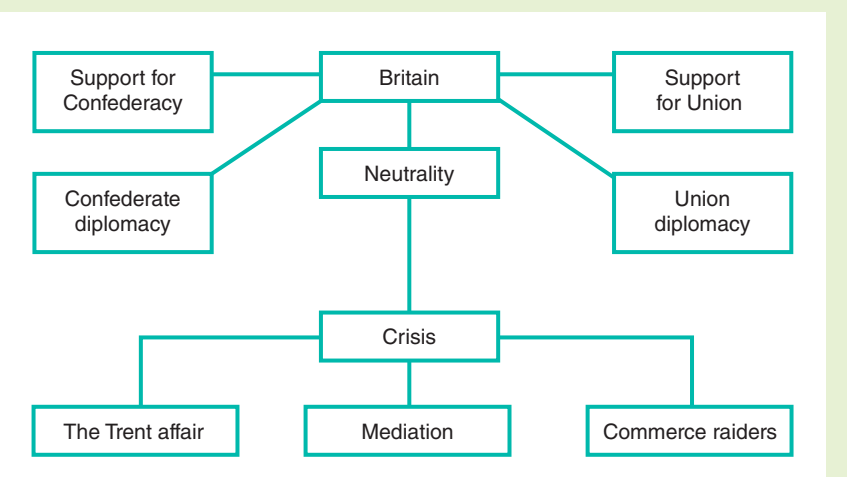
Confederate efforts

The Confederacy did its best. Agents were sent across the Atlantic to establish contacts with sympathetic British MPs. In an attempt to influence British opinion, the Confederacy also set up a newspaper, the *Index*, devoted to presenting the rebel case. Confederate purchasing agents had spectacular successes purchasing British armaments and supplies on a huge scale. Without this material support, the Confederate war effort might well have crumbled long before 1865. It is difficult to see what more the Confederacy could have done.

As the prospect of British recognition faded, the Confederacy made desperate efforts to win the allegiance of other nations. Overtures were made to Spain (a naturally interested power because of her Caribbean involvement), Sweden, Belgium and even the Vatican. They all came to nothing. No European country was prepared to jeopardise its position without a clear signal from Britain.

Conclusion

One of Palmerston's favourite sayings was: 'They who in quarrels interpose, will often get a bloody nose.' Given his caution, it was always likely that Britain would remain neutral. While Seward, Lincoln and Adams deserve some credit, their diplomatic skill should not be over-rated. Nor should Confederate diplomacy be castigated. Only if the Confederacy looked like winning would Britain recognise the Confederacy. Yet only if Britain recognised the Confederacy and went to war on its side, was it likely that the Confederacy would win.



SUMMARY DIAGRAM

Britain and the Civil War

5 Key debate

Key question: *Did the Confederacy defeat itself or was it defeated?*

On 10 April 1865, Robert E. Lee, having just surrendered at Appomattox, wrote a farewell address to his soldiers:

> *After four years' arduous service, marked by unsurpassed courage and fortitude, the Army of Northern Virginia has been compelled to yield to overwhelming numbers and resources.*

According to Lee, the Confederacy lost the war not because it fought badly but simply because the enemy had more men and guns. Historian Richard Current, reviewing the statistics of Union strength – two and a half times the South's population, three times its railway capacity, nine times its industrial production, overwhelming naval supremacy – concluded that 'surely in view of the disparity of resources, it would have taken a miracle … to enable the South to win. As usual, God was on the side of the heaviest battalions.'

Yet not all historians would accept that the Union's superior resources were the prime cause of Confederate defeat. Many scholars insist that defeat was the result of Confederate mistakes and/or internal problems which had little to do with resources.

Missed Confederate opportunities?

At many stages events on the battlefield might have gone differently and, if they had, the course of the war might have been different:

- Confederate forces might have been more aggressive after First Manassas.
- Had Stonewall Jackson been up to par in June–July 1862, Lee might have won a spectacular victory in the Seven Days battles.
- Who knows what would have happened had Lee's battle orders not fallen into Union hands in Maryland in September 1862 or Jackson had not been killed at Chancellorsville.
- Better Confederate leadership in 1863 might have prevented the loss of Vicksburg and brought victory at Gettysburg.

In short, the Confederate cause was not inevitably a 'lost cause'.

Political leadership

Historian David Potter claimed that 'If the Union and Confederacy had exchanged presidents with one another, the Confederacy might have won its independence.' Lincoln is generally seen as more eloquent in expressing war aims, more successful in communicating with the people, more skilful in keeping political factions working together, and better able to endure criticism. He is lauded for appointing the winning military team, for picking able subordinates, and for knowing how to delegate. Lincoln's superiority to

Davis might seem self-evident. Nevertheless, Lee could think of no one in the South who could have done a better job than Davis.

Davis's government is often charged with failing to manage the country's economy and finances efficiently. The main criticism is that it printed too much money. This fuelled inflation, which ravaged the economy and damaged Southern morale. However, given the Union blockade, inflation was inevitable. Despite its economic problems, the Confederacy maintained over 3 per cent of its population under arms – a higher figure than the North. In terms of the management of military supply, the Confederacy could boast some organisational successes. Ordnance Chief Gorgas, for example, built an arms industry virtually from scratch. The main problem was the shortage, not the management, of supplies.

Military leadership

- After appointing a fair share of blunderers, Lincoln finally found the winning team of Grant and Sherman.
- It may be that Davis and Lee pursued a flawed military strategy. Arguably Lee attacked too much and literally bled the Confederacy to death. However, it is unlikely that a purely defensive strategy would have been more successful. Confederate retreats often led to disastrous sieges and huge surrenders. Lee, who believed he had to win an overwhelming victory, came close to success on several occasions. Despite being outnumbered in every major campaign, he won victories which depressed Union and bolstered Confederate morale. Without Lee's generalship the Confederacy would have crumbled earlier. If other Confederate generals had fought as well, the war might have had a different outcome.

Confederate will

Today, many scholars insist that the Confederacy could have won if its people had possessed the will to make the necessary sacrifices.

Lack of nationalism?

Some scholars (for example, Beringer, Hattaway and Still) claim that the Confederacy did not generate a strong sense of nationalism. Thus, when the going got tough, Southerners found it tough to keep going. If the nationalist spirit had been strong enough, the argument goes, Southerners would have waged a savage guerrilla war after April 1865.

The lack of nationalism argument, however, is not convincing. The strength of patriotic feeling in 1861 produced 500,000 volunteers for military service. Confederate politicians, clergymen and newspaper editors did their utmost to create a sense of nationalism. The war, by creating both a unifying hatred of the enemy and a new set of heroes, strengthened Confederate nationalism. So did military service. Historian James McPherson found evidence of very strong patriotism in the letters of Southern soldiers. Most soldiers faithfully discharged their duty.

Historian Gary Gallagher suggests that the most nationalistic Southerners were young officers. They had few, if any, doubts about slavery, attributed base motives to Northerners in general and Republicans in particular, and supported secession. Their personal example in combat inspired their men and their achievements helped to nourish patriotism and resolve among civilians.

Far from explaining Confederate defeat, nationalism helps to explain why Southerners fought as long as they did. Northerners almost threw in the towel in the summer of 1864 when they suffered casualty rates that Southerners had endured for more than two years. The Confederacy's death toll was far greater than France's in the Franco-Prussian War (1870–1). Nobody suggests that Frenchmen in 1870 did not have a strong sense of national identity. Yet France lost, defeated by the stronger and more military adept Prussians. Nationalism is not a magic shield ensuring invulnerability to those who possess it.

Religious doubts?

Given so much death and destruction, some Southerners began to wonder if God was really on their side. Did these doubts help to corrode morale? It seems unlikely. Southern Church leaders supported the Confederate cause until the bitter end. During the war a great religious revival movement swept through the Confederate armies. Many men were convinced that God was testing the new nation and that out of suffering would come victory. Rather than explaining defeat, religion played a vital role in sustaining Southern will.

Slavery qualms?

The notion that many Southerners felt moral qualms about slavery, which undermined their will to fight, is unconvincing. All the evidence suggests that most Southerners went to war to preserve slavery and remained committed to it to the end.

Divisions within the Confederacy?

Recent scholarship has stressed that many groups within the South became disenchanted as the war progressed. Two-thirds of the Confederacy's white population were non-slaveholders who may have come to resent risking their lives and property to defend slavery. Some of them had opposed secession in 1861. Others became alienated as a result of hardship during the war. However, McPherson found little if any evidence of class division in the letters of Southern soldiers. Many non-slaveholders were ready to fight and die for the Confederacy from start to finish.

Confederate women?

'Historians have wondered in recent years why the Confederacy did not endure longer', wrote historian Drew Gilpin Faust: 'In considerable measure … it was because so many women did not want it to. It may well have been

because of its women that the South lost the Civil War.' Severe hardship on the home front, Faust claims, led to a growth of defeatism which was conveyed by letters to Southern soldiers. Women told their men to put family before national loyalty.

In reality, however, many Southern women remained loyal to the end, exhorting their men to stay at the front and fight. Increased privation, the experience of living under federal occupation, and the loss of loved ones often reinforced rather than eroded loyalty to the Confederacy.

The strength of Confederate will

Even in 1864–5, letters, diaries and newspapers reveal a tenacious popular will rooted in a sense of national community. 'The devils seem to have a determination that cannot but be admired', wrote Sherman in March 1864. 'No amount of poverty or adversity seems to shake their faith – niggers gone, wealth and luxury gone, money worthless, starvation in view within a period of two or three years, are causes enough to make the bravest tremble, yet I see no sign of let up – some few deserters – plenty tired of war, but the masses determined to fight it out.'

What is remarkable about the Confederacy is not its internal weaknesses but its staying power and the huge sacrifices that so many of its people made. The most sobering statistic is that half of the Confederacy's soldiers were killed or seriously wounded.

The strength of Union will

Historians have tended to examine why Southern will collapsed rather than ask the equally important question: why did Northern will hold? It is often said that the Confederacy had no chance in a war of attrition. In fact, a war of attrition was the best chance it had. To win, the Confederacy had to wear down Northern will: a long, bloody war was the best way to do this. The war was long and bloody but Northern will endured. Civilian morale was helped by the fact that life during the war went on much the same as usual. Northern losses were (relatively) less than those sustained by Southerners. The North was never seriously invaded and many Northerners experienced increased prosperity during the war. But ultimately Northern, like Southern, will, was affected by the outcome of campaigns. The morale of troops was particularly crucial. In 1864, 78 per cent of Union soldiers voted for Lincoln, proof that soldier morale still held strong. Union victories from mid-1863 onwards helped to sustain that morale.

Robert E. Lee and Confederate morale

As the war progressed, Lee and his Army of Northern Virginia embodied the Confederacy in the minds of most Southerners. His success sustained Southern hopes. Contemporaries understood the importance of military events to morale and, by extension, to the outcome of the war. In March 1865, Lincoln spoke of the 'progress of our arms, upon which all else chiefly depends'. But for victories at Atlanta and in the Shenandoah Valley, Lincoln

might have lost the 1864 election. The importance of the Army of Northern Virginia was such that few Southerners contemplated resistance after Lee's surrender at Appomattox, despite the fact that he surrendered only a fraction of Southerners under arms in April 1865.

Conclusion

When asked why the Confederates lost at Gettysburg, General Pickett replied, 'I think the Yankees had something to do with it.' The Yankees also explain why the Confederacy lost the war. The Union defeated the Confederacy; the Confederacy did not defeat itself. The Confederacy surrendered in 1865 because Union armies had crushed Southern military resistance. Defeat caused defeatism, not vice versa. A nation whose armies are beaten, railways wrecked, cities burned, countryside occupied and crops laid waste, loses its will – and ability – to continue fighting. In war 'big battalions' do normally triumph. The Civil War was no exception.

Chapter summary

The battles 1861–5

The Confederacy ultimately lost the war on the battlefield. Its armies, invariably outnumbered and less well equipped than Union forces, fought well, particularly in North Virginia, and came close to having the overwhelming victory that Lee sought in the Seven Days campaign and at Second Manassas. However, Lee's attempt to win that knock-out victory led to huge loss of Southern life – in the Seven Days and at Antietam and Gettysburg. The Confederacy could ill afford such losses. Union forces, ably led in the end by Grant and Sherman, gobbled up huge swathes of Confederate territory, especially in the west, and forced Southern commanders, including Lee, on the defensive. Once Lincoln was re-elected in November 1864, it was only a matter of time before the Confederacy was defeated. That defeat came with Lee's surrender at Appomattox in 1865. The Union's 'big battalions' thus eventually triumphed.

Examination advice

How to answer 'in what ways and with what effects' questions

In questions such as these, stay focused on what is being asked. In what ways and with what effects is really asking two questions. Be sure to discuss both. You should explain several ways and several outcomes or results.

Example

In what ways and with what effects was General Grant's military strategy successful?

1 You will need to explain the ways in which Grant's strategy was successful and what impacts his strategy had. You should be prepared, after

reviewing this chapter, to make a balanced judgement. Be sure to include what military and, in some cases, political consequences Grant's strategy had. Some of these could include both the impact his manoeuvres had on the North and the South. Try to strike a sensible balance by writing roughly the same amount for both ways and effects.

2 First take at least five minutes to write a short outline. This outline could take the form of a chart that illustrates what Grant did and the outcomes of his strategy. You should also write down the level of success that resulted from each strategy. An example of a chart is given below.

Event	*Level of success*
Fort Donelson (1862)	*Success*
Shiloh (1862)	*Heavy casualties but turned back Southern initiative. Fiercely criticised in Northern press.*
Vicksburg (1862–63)	*Long campaign. Brilliant strategy. South cut in two.*
Grant commander of western armies (1863)	*Success at Missionary Ridge.*
Grant made General-in-Chief (1864)	*Simultaneous movement all along the line. Several defeats.*
Wilderness Campaign (1864)	*Lee forced on defensive. Grant lost 50,000 men in 30 days. War of attrition favoured North.*
Fall of Petersburg (1865)	*Success led to Lee's surrender.*

3 In your introduction, briefly state the major points you plan to raise in your essay. These could include the following:

- *Definition of successful. Grant's strategy was ultimately successful militarily in that he outmanoeuvred the Southern forces.*
- *Grant as a general in the early stages of the war.*
- *Grant at Vicksburg. South cut in two.*
- *Some short-term reversals but overall strategy was sound if costly in men.*
- *The surrender of Lee at Appomattox.*
- *Political impact of heavy losses.*
- *Other generals who helped in the final victory, such as Sherman.*

4 In the body of your essay you need to discuss each of the points you raised in the introduction. Devote at least a paragraph to each one. Be sure to examine both the failures and successes of General Grant.

5 Your conclusion should tie together the major points you raised in the essay and how these relate to the question. An example of a good concluding paragraph is given below.

Overall, it is clear that General Grant's strategy was successful. He won significant victories at Vicksburg and Petersburg and brought the war to a conclusion. The idea of attacking 'all along the line' forced the South to break up its forces and lose whatever advantage it might have had in one particular theatre of war. At the same time, Grant's strategy did come at a very high cost to the men in blue: tens of thousands died in the final campaigns of the war.

6 Now try writing a complete answer to the question following the advice above.



Examination practice

Below are three exam-style questions for you to practise on this topic.

1 In what ways and with what effects were Southern diplomatic efforts effective?

2 Evaluate the Northern and Southern military strategies from 1861 to 1865. (For guidance on how to answer 'evaluate' questions, see page 79.)

3 To what extent was the Union's foreign policy a key factor in its victory? (For guidance on how to answer 'to what extent' questions, see page 160.)

CHAPTER 8

Reconstruction

In 1861, the black leader Frederick Douglass (see page 55) predicted, 'The American people and the government of Washington may refuse to recognise it for a time but the inexorable logic of events will force it upon them in the end; that the war now being waged in this land is a war for and against slavery.' Douglass's prediction proved correct. By 1865, American slaves had been freed. The impact of emancipation was one of the problems of Reconstruction – the process of restoring the Confederate states to the Union. This chapter will examine the process and impact of Reconstruction by focusing on the following key questions:

- To what extent was Lincoln the Great Emancipator?
- What were Lincoln's aims with regard to Reconstruction?
- Did Johnson continue Lincoln's Reconstruction policies?
- What were the aims of Congressional Reconstruction?
- Why were Southern states so quickly redeemed?
- Was the Civil War the USA's second revolution?

1 Emancipation

Key question: *To what extent was Lincoln the Great Emancipator?*

Why was the slavery issue so difficult for Lincoln in 1861–2?

Lincoln and the slavery issue

In 1861, Lincoln was determined to maintain Northern unity. An avowed policy of emancipation of the slaves would alienate not only Northern Democrats, but also the four Union slave states (Kentucky, Maryland, Missouri and Delaware), which together had about 400,000 slaves. It would also spur Southerners to an even greater effort and leave no possibility of a compromise peace.

In April 1861, Lincoln declared, 'I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the states where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so, and I have no inclination to do so.' Congress supported this stance. In July, the Crittenden Resolution, which disclaimed any intention of meddling with 'the rights or established institutions' of the South, won overwhelming approval in Congress.

'Contraband'

A set of forces placed pressure on the federal government to take some action with regard to emancipation. One problem was what to do with

refugee slaves who came to the camps of Union armies occupying parts of the South. By the letter of the Fugitive Slave Act (see pages 74–5), they should have been returned to their owners. Some Union soldiers did just that. Others, on both humane and pragmatic grounds – the slaves would be punished and could also help the rebel war effort – opposed such action.

In May 1861, General Benjamin Butler declared that slaves who came to his camp were to be confiscated as '**contraband of war**', thus ensuring that they were not returned to their Confederate owners. This neatly avoided the question of whether or not the fugitives were free and turned the Southerners' argument that slaves were property against them. Butler's action was supported by the Confiscation Act (August 1861) which threatened any property used 'for insurrectionary purposes' with confiscation. It left unsettled the issue of whether or not 'confiscated' slaves became free.

KEY TERM

Contraband of war
Goods which can be confiscated from the enemy.

Radical Republicans

As it became clear that there was little likelihood of the Confederate states being enticed back into the Union, radical Republicans began to make their influence felt. To most radicals it seemed that to fight slaveholders without fighting slavery was (in Frederick Douglass's words) 'a half-hearted business'. Radicals wanted to abolish slavery and create a new order in the South. They had a variety of motives:

- Some, but not all, were genuinely concerned for black Americans.
- Most, if not all, had a loathing of slaveholders, who they blamed for causing the war.
- All were concerned that if the Union was restored without slavery being abolished, nothing would have been solved.
- If emancipation became a Union war aim there was little chance that Britain would support the Confederacy (see pages 190–4).

By December 1861, most Republicans supported a tougher stand against slavery. The House of Representatives now refused to reaffirm Crittenden's resolution. To one Congressman it seemed that a powerful faction was already forming whose watchword was 'Emancipation – the utter extinction of slavery.'

Lincoln's views in 1861

In August 1861, General Frémont, the 1856 Republican presidential candidate and now Union commander in Missouri, issued a proclamation freeing the slaves of all Confederate supporters in Missouri. In Lincoln's view this was a step too far and he ordered that Frémont rescind his order. When Frémont refused, Lincoln removed him from his Missouri command.

Radicals implored Lincoln to declare his support for emancipation. He remained hesitant. He referred to men like abolitionist Charles Sumner (see pages 88–9) as the conscience of his party and shared the radical conviction that slavery was a moral evil. However, he still had no wish to alienate

Northern Democrats or the Union slave states, and feared that if emancipation became a Union war aim, the conflict would degenerate into a 'violent and remorseless struggle'. 'We didn't go into the war to put down slavery – but to put the flag back', declared Lincoln in December 1861: '... This thunderbolt will keep.'

Why did Lincoln issue the Emancipation Proclamation?

The Emancipation Proclamation

Congressional measures in 1862

In the spring of 1862, Congress began to take action against slavery. In April, slavery in Washington was abolished; provision was made to compensate slave owners and to support the colonisation of ex-slaves to Liberia or Haiti. In June, Congress abolished slavery in all federal territories. In July, a second and much more sweeping Confiscation Act was enacted. This allowed the seizure of all enemy 'property'; slaves in such cases were to be set 'forever free'. Lincoln also received authority to employ 'persons of African descent' in any capacity deemed necessary for the suppression of the rebellion. As a sweetener to Lincoln, Congress set aside $500,000 for colonisation expenses.

The Confiscation Act met with considerable resistance in Congress. Some thought it went too far. Others thought it didn't go far enough and were disappointed that the measure proposed to do nothing about slavery in the Union slave states. Lincoln had doubts about the bill, but in the end signed it. In fact, the second Confiscation Act was not as radical as it seemed. The only way that a slave could gain freedom was on a case-by-case basis before a federal court: this court had to find that the slave owner was, in fact, a rebel.

Lincoln's views: spring/summer 1862

In July 1862, William Lloyd Garrison (see page 53) described Lincoln's handling of the slavery issue as, 'stumbling, halting, prevaricating, irresolute, weak, besotted'. At best Lincoln had followed Northern opinion; others – Congressmen and army officers – had led it. However, by mid-1862, Lincoln, certain that it was his responsibility to make the final decision on the emancipation issue, was convinced that a bold step was necessary.

Even before the summer of 1862, Lincoln had begun to take action. In March 1862, he sent Congress a request that compensation be given to any state which adopted the principle of gradual abolition of slavery. Owners would be given $400 for every slave freed. He hoped that the Union slave states would adopt their own emancipation laws and that some of the rebel states might then follow suit. Abolitionists denounced Lincoln's measure, arguing that justice would be better served by compensating the slaves for their long years in bondage rather than by indemnifying slaveholders. Nevertheless, Congress approved the scheme for gradual compensated emancipation. However, to Lincoln's chagrin, the Union slave states refused to implement emancipation on any terms.

Thwarted in the North, Lincoln determined to act in the South. The situation had changed since 1861. The allegiance of Kentucky, Maryland and Missouri was now secure. He was aware of the pressure from radical Republicans and reluctant to alienate them. Lincoln was also concerned that if the Union won, and the Southern states re-entered the Union with slavery untouched, it would remain a source of future strife. His main belief, however, was that a bold statement on emancipation would weaken the Confederacy.

The Proclamation

In July 1862, Lincoln presented his Emancipation Proclamation to his cabinet. Many of its members greeted the news with astonishment. 'The measure goes beyond anything I have recommended', said War Secretary Edwin Stanton. All except Postmaster Montgomery Blair – who feared that the Proclamation would harm Republican chances in the autumn mid-term elections – approved. However, Secretary of State William Seward argued that it should only be issued after a military success; otherwise it would seem like an act of desperation born of weakness. Lincoln accepted the logic of this and waited patiently.

When Horace Greeley, editor of the *New York Tribune*, wrote a bitter editorial criticising him for not doing more on the slavery front, Lincoln still did not reveal his intentions. He responded to Greeley by saying, 'If I could save the Union without freeing any slave I would do it and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone I would also do that.'

A preliminary version of the Proclamation was issued on 22 September 1862 after the battle of Antietam (see pages 171–3). Justified by Lincoln as 'a fit and necessary war measure', it seemed, on the surface, to be cautious:

- Slavery was to be left untouched in states that returned to the Union before 1 January 1863.
- Thereafter all slaves in enemy territory conquered by Union armies would be 'forever free'.

Thus, the Proclamation had no effect whatsoever in the Union slave states. It did not even affect slavery in those areas that had already been brought back under Union control.

Reaction to the Proclamation

British Prime Minister Palmerston was unimpressed: 'It is not easy to estimate how utterly powerless and contemptible a government must have become which could sanction such trash.' The London *Spectator* said that the principle behind the proclamation seemed to be, 'not that a human being cannot justly own another, but that he cannot own him unless he is loyal to the United States'.

Nevertheless, most abolitionists were delighted. 'God bless Abraham Lincoln', wrote Greeley. 'Thank God, the skies are brighter and the air is

purer, now that slavery has been handed over to judgement', said Charles Sumner. Radical Republicans appreciated that Lincoln had gone as far as his powers allowed in making the war a war to end slavery. (Many British commentators misunderstood Lincoln's constitutional powers and the fact that he had no power to act against slavery in areas loyal to the USA unless this could be seen as essential to the Union war effort.) As Union forces advanced, slavery in the Confederacy would end – and once it ended there it could not survive in the border states. According to historian Richard Ransom, 'with the stroke of a pen, the president had turned the war into a revolution'.

The mid-term elections

Northern Democrats, convinced that the Proclamation would make it impossible to bring the Confederate states back into the Union, denounced the measure. Aware of the fear of a migration of ex-slaves northwards, Democrats made emancipation a central issue in the mid-term elections in autumn 1862.

Historians once claimed that these elections were a triumph for the Democrats, and thus proof that most Northerners were opposed to emancipation. The Republicans lost control of several states, and also lost 35 Congressional seats. Lincoln acknowledged that his Proclamation contributed to the setbacks. However, on closer analysis, the election results suggest that emancipation had less impact than Lincoln believed. Overall, the Republicans retained control of most states and easily kept control of Congress. Democrat majorities in Pennsylvania, Ohio, New York and Indiana were small and could be explained by the inability of Republican-supporting soldiers to vote. The Republicans actually suffered the smallest net loss of a party in power for twenty years.

The impact of the Proclamation

On 1 January 1863, Lincoln proclaimed that the freedom of all slaves in rebellious regions was now a Union war aim – 'an act of justice' as well as 'military necessity'. Not wishing to be held responsible for a bloody slave revolt, he urged slaves 'to abstain from all violence, unless in necessary self-defence'. At the same time, he called on Union forces to protect the rights of those they made free.

Davis condemned the Proclamation as 'the most execrable measure recorded in the history of guilty man'. In the short term, it may well have helped to stiffen Confederate resistance. However, in the long term it weakened the Confederacy, which now stood little chance of winning British support. By encouraging slaves to flee to Union lines, the Proclamation worsened the South's manpower shortage. As Lincoln said: 'Freedom has given us the control of 200,000 able-bodied men … It will give us more yet. Just so much has it subtracted from the strength of our enemies.'

The Thirteenth Amendment

The Proclamation was a war measure that would have questionable force once the war ended. Consequently, the Republicans determined to pass a constitutional amendment prohibiting slavery. The Senate passed the amendment in 1864 but it failed to get the necessary two-thirds support in the House.

In June 1864, the Republican national convention, urged on by Lincoln, agreed to endorse the constitutional amendment to end slavery. Interpreting Republican election success in November (see pages 184–5) as public support for the amendment, Lincoln redoubled his efforts to secure Congressional approval, applying patronage pressure to several Democrats in the House – to good effect. On 31 January 1865, the House approved (with three votes to spare) the Thirteenth Amendment for ratification by the states.

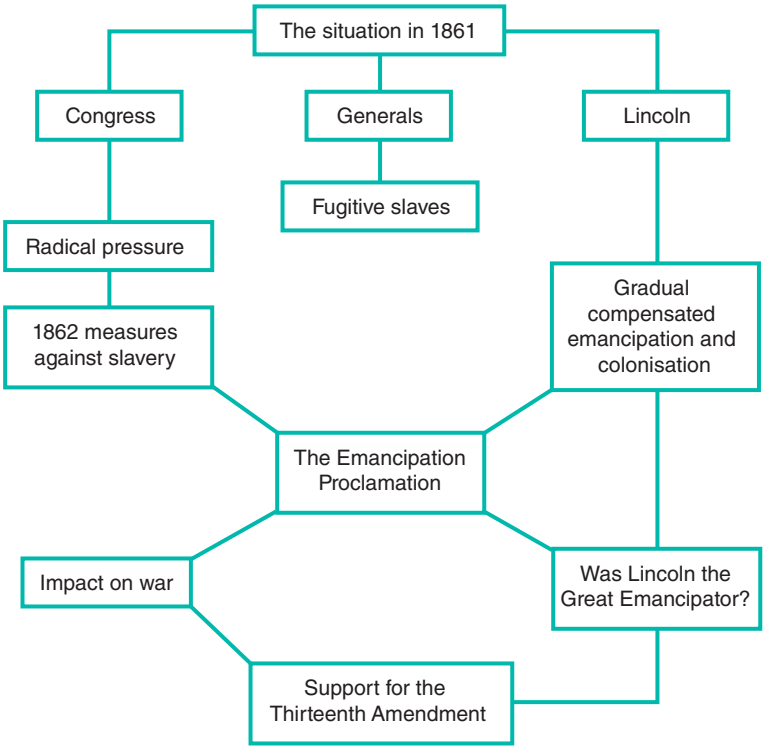
Lincoln was delighted. It was, he said, 'a king's cure for all the evils. It winds the whole thing up.' It hardly did that, but it was a major step forward.

The Great Emancipator?

From January 1863, Union soldiers fought for the revolutionary goal of a new Union without slavery. Many – but by no means all – Northerners came to accept this. Most would not have accepted it in 1861. During the war opinion changed. Lincoln's policies reflected and influenced that change. He moved cautiously, his actions based more on pragmatism than on morality. From start to finish his main aim was to preserve the Union, not to free the slaves. But by mid-1862 Lincoln believed that the two issues had become nearly one and the same. By freeing the slaves he could help to preserve the Union.

Some scholars have claimed that Lincoln did his best to evade the whole question of black freedom and that it was escaping slaves who forced him to embrace emancipation. However, the argument that the slaves freed themselves has been pushed too far. Only Union victory brought slavery to an end. Ultimately slaves were freed by the Union army. Lincoln was commander-in-chief of that army. The fact that he was also committed to freeing the slaves was crucial.

By 1865, many abolitionists were prepared to give credit where credit was due. In 1865, Garrison commended Lincoln for having done a 'mighty work for the freedom of millions … I have the utmost faith in the benevolence of your heart, the purity of your motives and the integrity of your spirit.' Frederick Douglass commented in 1876: 'Viewed from the genuine abolition ground, Mr Lincoln seemed tardy, cold, dull and indifferent; but measuring him by the sentiment of his country, a sentiment he was bound as a statesman to consult, he was swift, zealous, radical and determined.'



SUMMARY DIAGRAM

Emancipation

2 Lincoln and Reconstruction 1861–5

Key question: What were Lincoln's aims with regard to Reconstruction?

In 1865, the triumphant federal government faced the problem of restoring the eleven Confederate states to the Union. This process is known as Reconstruction. The period from 1865 to 1877 is often called the 'age of Reconstruction'. However, Reconstruction was not something that began in 1865: it was an issue from 1861 onwards; it was really what the war was all about. Nor did the process of Reconstruction end with the so-called Compromise of 1877. In most Southern states it ended much earlier. The debate over time-scale is by no means the only debate about Reconstruction. Virtually every aspect of the topic has been the subject of controversy.

The problem of Reconstruction

Why was Reconstruction such a problem?

If reconstructing Reconstruction is hard for historians, the reality was even harder for American politicians at the time. There were no precedents and the Constitution provided little guidance. There were also fundamental disagreements about the basic issue of bringing the seceded states back into the Union. Ironically, the ex-Confederate states now claimed they had never legally been out of it. Equally ironically, many Republicans, who had insisted the Southern states could not secede, now claimed that they had in fact seceded, thereby reverting to territorial status.

There were other important matters to be resolved. Somehow:

- a feeling of loyalty to the Union had to be restored among white Southerners
- the war-torn economy of the South had to be rebuilt
- the newly freed slaves had to be given the opportunity to enjoy their freedom.

From 1861, as Union troops pushed into the South, Lincoln's administration faced the problem of how to restore loyal governments in the rebel states. In fact, there was a series of inter-related problems:

- On what terms should the states be reunited to the Union?
- How should Southerners be treated?
- Should Congress or the president decide Reconstruction policy?

Northern opinion was divided on all these matters. As well as differences between Republicans and Democrats, there were differences within the Republican Party.

Lincoln and Reconstruction

Lincoln was convinced that Reconstruction was a presidential concern. The Constitution gave him the power of pardon: he was also commander-in-chief. He realised, however, that once the war ended, his powers would be considerably reduced. If he was to control Reconstruction, he needed to establish firm principles during the war.

Lincoln's strategic aim was consistent: he wanted to restore the Union as quickly as possible. His usual policy was to install military governors in those areas that had been partially reconquered. The governors were expected to work with whatever popular support they could find. Lincoln hoped that military government would only last until enough loyal citizens could form a new state government.

The 10 per cent plan

Lincoln spelt out his Reconstruction ideas in December 1863. He offered pardon to white Southerners who would take an oath of allegiance to the Union. When 10 per cent of the 1860 electorate had taken this oath, a new

state government could be established. Provided the state then accepted the abolition of slavery, Lincoln agreed to recognise its government. In early 1864, Tennessee, Louisiana and Arkansas used this 10 per cent plan to set up new governments.

What were the aims of the radical Republicans?

Republican opposition

Radical Republicans disagreed with Lincoln's actions.

The radical Republicans

Radical Republican leaders included:

- Thaddeus Stevens, a Pennsylvanian industrialist
- Charles Sumner, a leading abolitionist
- Benjamin Wade, a politician from Ohio.

Many had sat in Congress for years. This enhanced their influence, ensuring that they were well represented on key committees. Most had good abolitionist credentials and some had long supported equal rights for blacks. Although the radicals did not work in close and constant harmony, most held similar views with regard to Reconstruction:

- They wanted to impose a harsh settlement on the South, punishing the main rebels by confiscating their land.
- They believed that ex-slaves should have the same rights as white Americans.

Political motivation?

It has been claimed that radical concern for black rights, particularly black suffrage, was triggered by shabby political motives rather than idealism. Certainly, radicals feared that once the Southern states were back within the Union, the Democrat Party would again be a major threat. There seemed two ways to prevent this: first, to ensure that ex-slaves could vote (they would surely vote Republican); and second, to disfranchise large numbers of rebels. Many radicals did not separate idealism and political pragmatism: they believed that blacks should be entitled to vote and were not ashamed to assert that such a policy would ensure Republican ascendancy.

Whatever their motives, most radicals were convinced that the Southern states, by seceding, had reverted to the condition of territories and should be subject to Congress's authority. Congress, not the president, should thus control the Reconstruction process.

The Wade–Davis bill

Radical dissatisfaction with Lincoln's 10 per cent plan was soon apparent. In April 1864, a Louisiana convention had drawn up a constitution banning slavery, but not giving blacks the vote. Over 10 per cent of Louisiana's electorate voted in favour of the constitution. Lincoln immediately recognised the new Louisiana government and treated the state as if it had

been restored to the Union. However, Congress rejected Louisiana's constitution and refused admission to its two senators.

Henry Davis and Benjamin Wade now introduced a bill requiring not 10 but 50 per cent of the people of the Confederate states to take an 'ironclad oath' – an oath that they had never voluntarily supported the rebellion – before the states could return into the Union. Moreover, anyone who had held political office during the Confederacy or had voluntarily borne arms against the Union was to be excluded from the political process.

The Wade–Davis bill was not a fully fledged radical measure: it did not, for example, guarantee blacks equal political rights. Its main purpose was to postpone Reconstruction until the war was over, when Congress would have more control. The bill passed both houses of Congress. Lincoln, aware of the political storm that would (and did) follow, vetoed the bill. His hopes of formulating a definitive method by which former Confederate states would be allowed back into the Union had failed.

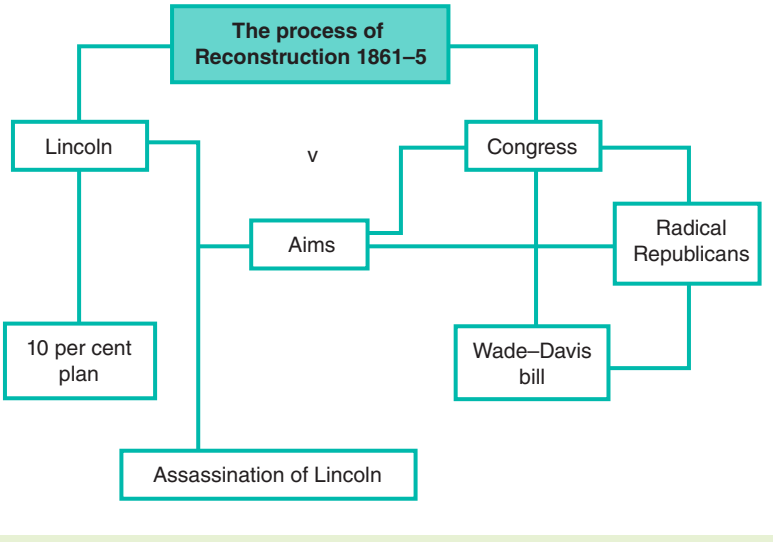
Lincoln's views in 1865

What were Lincoln's views on Reconstruction in 1865?

Precisely where Lincoln stood on many Reconstruction issues by 1865 is a matter of debate. He seems to have been moving cautiously towards supporting the view that blacks should have equality before the law and talked in terms of giving some, especially those who had fought for the Union, the vote. On such matters as confiscation of property (slaves apart) and punishment of Confederate leaders, he was prepared to be generous. In his second inauguration speech in March 1865, he talked of 'malice towards none' and the need for a 'just and lasting peace'.

But it was clear that he faced problems. His executive power had not enabled him to bring a single rebel state back into the Union. The Unionist governments, created in Tennessee, Arkansas and Louisiana, had not been recognised by Congress. His party, even his own cabinet, was divided on a host of Reconstruction matters.

Just what Lincoln would have done will remain forever a mystery. On 14 April 1865, he was murdered by Southern actor John Wilkes Booth in the Ford Theatre in Washington. Booth escaped, but within days had been tracked down and killed by Union troops. Four others – three men and a woman – who were involved in the assassination were tried, found guilty and hanged. While most Northerners assumed that Confederate leaders had instigated the murder, it seems likely that the plot arose in the fevered mind of Booth alone. He had long wanted to strike a blow for the Southern cause. Lincoln's murder did little to help that cause.



SUMMARY DIAGRAM

Lincoln and Reconstruction 1861–5

3 Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction

Key question: *Did Johnson continue Lincoln's Reconstruction policies?*

After Lincoln's assassination, Vice-President Andrew Johnson (1808–75), an ex-Democrat and ex-slave owner from Tennessee, became president. A self-made man who had risen from tailor's apprentice to prosperous landowner, Johnson had been the only senator from any of the Confederate states to stay loyal to the Union. In 1864, in an effort to balance the Republican/Unionist ticket, Johnson was nominated vice-president.

A few radicals were (privately) pleased that Johnson had replaced Lincoln, even if they disliked the circumstances. They hoped he would take a tougher stance against the rebel leaders. 'Traitors', Johnson had declared in 1864, 'must be punished and impoverished'. This was the kind of talk that radicals liked to hear. However, the Johnson–radical honeymoon was short lived. Differences over Reconstruction policies were soon to lead to bitter separation.

Andrew Johnson, 1808–75

Born in extreme poverty in Raleigh, North Carolina, Johnson moved to Tennessee in 1826 where he worked as a tailor. Lacking formal education, he was taught to read and write by his wife Eliza McCardle, who he married in 1827. Very much a self-made man, Johnson soon involved himself in Democratic politics and held a series of public offices. In 1853 he became Governor of Tennessee and he was elected to the Senate in 1857. Although he vigorously defended the South and slavery in Congress, he remained loyal to the Union in 1861 – the only Southern senator who did not go with the Confederacy. After Union troops occupied much of Tennessee in 1862, Lincoln appointed Johnson military governor. In 1864 he was elected Lincoln's vice-president on the National Union ticket (see page 183). Following Lincoln's assassination in April 1865, he became president and had to deal with the problems of Reconstruction. Antagonising Republican leaders in Congress, he came very close to being **impeached** in 1868 (see pages 218–19). He was re-elected to the Senate in 1875 but died a few months later.

Throughout his political career, Johnson stressed his working-class origins and claimed a special identification with ordinary Americans. In 1865, it seemed likely that he would take a tough stand against the Confederate leaders, especially the plantation owners who he had long attacked. This pleased radical Republicans. 'We have faith in you', Benjamin Wade told Johnson in April 1865. 'By the Gods there will be no trouble now in running the government.' However, Johnson and the radicals quickly fell out.



Nor did Johnson particularly impress the Democrats. According to Richard Taylor, a leading Southern Democrat, Johnson 'was of an obstinate, suspicious temper. Like a badger, one had to dig him out of his hole; and he was ever in one except when on the hustings, addressing the crowd.'

Historians have generally given Johnson a poor press. He has been criticised for sharing the racial views of most white Southerners and being unconcerned about the plight of ex-slaves. He has also been attacked for stubbornly ignoring the Northern political mood. However, some recent biographers have been more sympathetic, arguing that Johnson's Reconstruction policies were essentially right, his main failure being his inability to carry them out.

The situation in the South

What problems did Johnson face?

The situation facing Johnson in the South might have been worse. By May 1865 the war was effectively over. Confederate soldiers returned home and there was no major guerrilla resistance. This meant that Johnson's administration could quickly demobilise Union armed forces. By late 1866, the Union army was only 38,000 strong.

Southern problems

However, there were serious problems in the South:

- A quarter of all white Southern men of military age had died in the war. Another quarter had been seriously wounded. (Mississippi spent a fifth of its revenue in 1865 on purchasing artificial limbs for Confederate veterans.)
- The Southern economy was in tatters. Union armies had caused widespread devastation.
- The Southern banking system was in chaos.

KEY TERM

Impeached/ impeachment The process by which a president who has been found guilty of grave offences by Congress can be removed from office.

- Large numbers of black and white Southerners were dependent on federal aid for subsistence.
- The emancipation of the slaves meant that the South had lost over $2 billion of capital.

What were Johnson's aims?

Presidential reconstruction

Johnson's aims

Johnson, who kept Lincoln's cabinet, claimed his intention was to continue Lincoln's policy. Viewing Reconstruction as an executive not a legislative function, he hoped to restore the Southern states to the Union before Congress met in December 1865. Keen that the USA should return to its normal functioning as soon as possible, Johnson saw no alternative but to work with ex-Confederates. He thus favoured leniency. Committed to states' rights, he believed it was not the federal government's responsibility to decide suffrage issues or to involve itself in economic and social matters. Nor had he any wish to promote the position of ex-slaves. Shaped by a lifetime in Tennessee, he did not consider blacks to be equal to whites and was opposed to black suffrage.

Johnson's actions

In May 1865, Johnson extended recognition to the Southern governments created under Lincoln's administration (none of which had enfranchised blacks). In the same month, he issued a general amnesty to Southerners who were willing to swear an oath of allegiance and support emancipation. While major Confederate office holders were exempted, they could apply for a presidential pardon. Over the summer Johnson granted thousands of pardons. Johnson also ordered that confiscated land be returned to pardoned Southerners. This necessitated the army evicting thousands of **freedmen** across the South.

KEY TERM

Freedmen Men and women who had once been slaves.

Why Johnson so quickly abandoned the idea of punishing the Southern elite is something of a mystery. There were rumours at the time that some Southerners used bribery to win pardons. Others suspected that flattery by Southern planters, and the charms of their wives, played on the president's ego. More likely, Johnson came to view co-operation with Southerners as indispensable to two inter-related goals: the maintenance of white supremacy in the South, and his own re-election as president in 1868. To achieve the latter, he needed to retain the support of Republicans, win over moderate Northern Democrats and build up a following in the South.

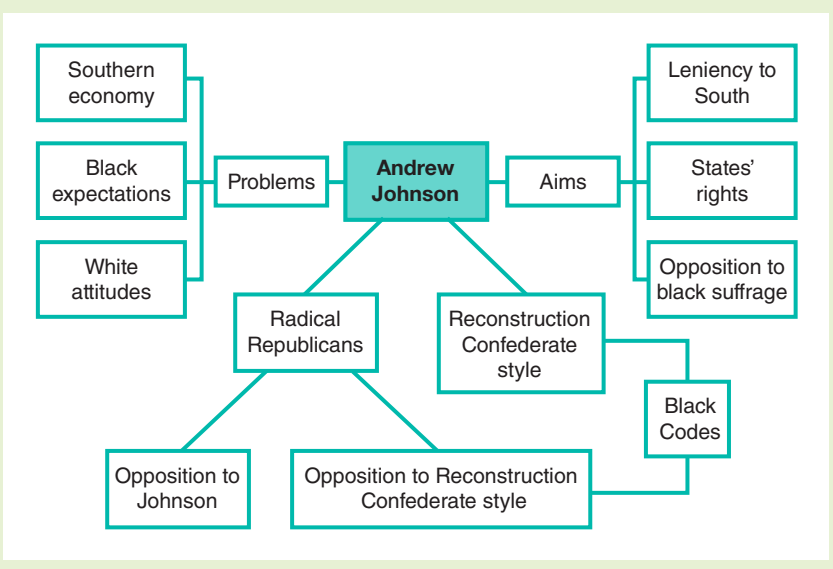
Johnson made the process by which Southern states would return to the Union easy, appointing provisional state governors who did their best to co-operate with white Southerners. Their main task was to hold elections (in which only whites could vote) for state conventions. The conventions were to draw up new constitutions that accepted that slavery was illegal. Once this was done the states would be readmitted to the Union.

Johnson's scheme was approved by his cabinet and seemed (in 1865) to have the support of most Northerners. While many Republicans favoured black suffrage, few – the radicals apart – saw it as a reason to repudiate the president. Moderate Republicans, anxious to keep their party united, realised that black rights was a potentially divisive issue in the North.

'Reconstruction Confederate style'

White Southerners set about implementing Johnson's terms. State conventions acknowledged the end of slavery. The South then proceeded to elect legislatures, governors and members of Congress. Thereafter, the new Southern governments searched for means of keeping the freedmen under control. No state enfranchised blacks. All introduced 'Black Codes', designed to ensure that blacks remained second-class citizens (see page 244). The aim of 'Reconstruction Confederate style' was to resurrect as near as possible the old order.

White Southerners, given their basic attitudes, could hardly have been expected to act otherwise. Johnson did not approve of all the developments in the South and expressed some concern for the freedmen. But given his 'states' rights' ideology, he believed he had no alternative but to accept what had occurred. In December 1865, he announced that the work of 'restoration' was complete.



SUMMARY DIAGRAM

Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction

4 Congressional Reconstruction 1866–8

Key question: What were the aims of Congressional Reconstruction?

By the time Congress met in December 1865, there were misgivings about Johnson's leniency. After four years of war Northerners had a profound distrust of the South. The fact that the 'new' Southern Congressmen included Alexander Stephens (the former Confederate vice-president), four Confederate generals and 58 Confederate Congress members did not reassure Northerners of the South's good intent. Nor did the Black Codes. Unless the federal government took action, blacks would not have equal opportunities. Moreover, there seemed every likelihood that Southerners with their Northern Democrat allies would soon dominate the political scene. The return of the Southern states would bring in 22 senators and 63 members of the House, most of whom would be Democrat.

Why did Congress take over the Reconstruction process?

Congressional aims

Most Republican Congressmen were moderates – not radicals. Many were not enthusiastic about black suffrage; nor did they wish to greatly expand federal authority. But most thought that Confederate leaders should be barred from holding office and that the basic rights of ex-slaves should be protected. Many Congressmen agreed with radical leader Thaddeus Stevens when he declared that Congress must actively help free blacks: 'This Congress is bound to provide for them until they can take care of themselves. If we do not furnish them with homesteads, and hedge them around with protective laws; if we leave them to the legislation of their late masters, we had better have left them in bondage.'

Thus Congress refused to admit the Southern Congressmen or to recognise the new regimes in the South. In an effort to control developments, a Committee on Reconstruction was formed to recommend a new policy. This Committee had the support of most Republicans and was not dominated by radicals. The moderate Republican majority hoped to work out a compromise that would guarantee basic rights to freedmen and be acceptable to Johnson.

Congress versus Johnson

Instead of working with the moderate Republicans Johnson chose to side with the Democrats. When Congress tried to enlarge the powers of the Freedmen's Bureau (see page 243) he vetoed it, claiming that it was an unwarranted continuation of war power. Moderate Republicans were horrified. Despite huge problems the Bureau had operated quite effectively, providing basic welfare provision for ex-slaves. Johnson's veto helped to

convince many Republicans that they could no longer work with the president.

The Civil Rights Act

Moderate and radical Republicans now joined forces to introduce a Civil Rights Act which aimed to guarantee minimal rights to blacks. Defining all people born in the USA (except untaxed Native Americans) as national citizens, the measure asserted the right of the federal government to intervene in state affairs where and when necessary to protect the rights of US citizens. The bill received the virtual unanimous support of Congressional Republicans.

Johnson stuck to his guns. Arguing that civil rights were a state matter, he vetoed the measure. Congress struck back. In April 1866 a two-thirds majority ensured that Johnson's veto was over-ridden and the Civil Rights Act became law. A few weeks later Congress passed a second Freedmen Bureau Act over Johnson's veto.

The Fourteenth Amendment

To ensure that civil rights could not be changed in future Congress now adopted the Fourteenth Amendment (which embodied the Civil Rights Act). This guaranteed all citizens equality before the law. If individual states tried to abridge the rights of American citizens, the federal government could intervene. It also banned from office Confederates who before the war had taken an oath of allegiance to the Union, required of officials ranging from the president down to postmasters. This made virtually the entire political leadership of the South ineligible for office. Rejected by all the ex-Confederate states (except Tennessee), it failed to get the approval of 75 per cent of the states that was necessary for it to become law.

Race riots

In the summer of 1866, there were serious race riots in the South, first in Memphis (May) and then in New Orleans (July). Gangs of whites attacked black 'agitators', resulting in 80–90 black deaths. Most Northerners were appalled. They were similarly appalled by the rise of paramilitary organisations such as the Knights of the White Camelia and the Ku Klux Klan which aimed to terrorise blacks and those whites who sympathised with them.

The 1866 mid-term elections

The 1866 mid-term elections seemed to provide Johnson with an opportunity to strengthen his position. Hoping to unite Democrats and conservative Republicans he supported the National Union Convention which met in Philadelphia in July. The Convention called for the election of Congressmen who would support Johnson's policies. Johnson threw himself into the election campaign, speaking in many of America's largest cities. This unprecedented effort backfired. Confronted by hecklers, Johnson often lost

his temper and in so doing surrendered his presidential dignity. Moreover, his hopes of establishing a new party did not materialise. The National Union movement soon became little more than the Democrats in a new guise. The Republicans had no difficulty campaigning against both Johnson and the Democrats. Republican leaders harked back to the war, insisting that the fruits of victory would be lost if Northerners voted Democrat/National Union.

The election results were a disaster for Johnson and a triumph for the Republicans, who won all but three states. In the new Congress the Republicans would have a comfortable two-thirds majority in both Houses, ensuring that they could over-ride any presidential veto.

How harsh was Congressional Reconstruction?

Congressional Reconstruction

The Republican-dominated Congress, which met between December 1866 and March 1867, now took over the Reconstruction process.

The Military Reconstruction Act

In the spring of 1867, Congress passed a Military Reconstruction Act. This stated that:

- no legal government existed in any ex-Confederate state (except Tennessee)
- the ten Southern states were to be divided into five military districts, each placed under a federal commander
- to get back into the Union, Southern states had to elect constitutional conventions which would accept black suffrage and ratify the Fourteenth Amendment.

The bill was passed despite Johnson's veto.

Efforts to weaken Johnson

Congress then moved to weaken Johnson's power with the following measures:

- A Command of the Army Act, recognising the importance of the army in the Reconstruction process, reduced Johnson's military powers.
- The Tenure of Office Act barred him from removing a host of officeholders, including members of his own cabinet.

The Tenure of Office Act was designed to protect Secretary of War Stanton, a fierce critic of Johnson, who had still not resigned from his cabinet. Johnson did not accept this muzzling without a fight and proceeded first to suspend and then to dismiss Stanton.

Johnson impeached

Republicans in the House of Representatives, convinced that Johnson had broken the law, determined in February 1868 (by 126 votes to 47) to impeach him for 'high crimes and misdemeanours'. The impeachment proceedings

took place in the Senate in the spring of 1868. Johnson faced a mixed bag of charges but essentially they narrowed down to the removal of Stanton from office and not co-operating with Congress. Underpinning these 'crimes' was the fact that many Republicans were out for revenge and anxious to get rid of Johnson, who they believed was impeding the implementation of Congress's Reconstruction policy. After a two-month trial, 35 senators voted against Johnson and 19 for him. This was one vote short of the two-thirds majority needed to impeach him.

Although he had survived, for the rest of his term he was very much a 'lame duck' president. Nevertheless, he still did all he could to water down Congress's actions. By December 1868, for example, he had given pardons to most leading Southerners.

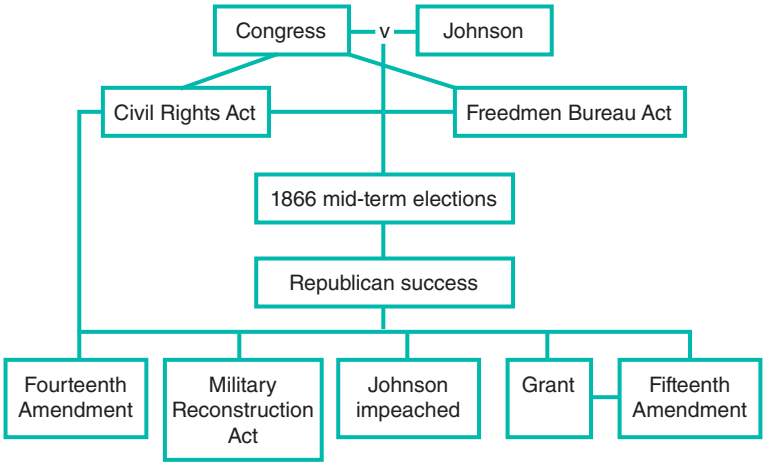
President Grant

In 1868, the Republicans chose General Grant as their presidential candidate. Grant, who had shown little interest in party politics and voted Democrat before the Civil War, was ambitious, felt honoured to be nominated and thought it his duty to stand. His Democrat opponent, Horatio Seymour, campaigned against black equality. Although Grant easily won the electoral college vote (by 214 votes to 80), he won only 52 per cent of the popular vote. His popular majority was the result of Southern black support.

The Fifteenth Amendment

Given the 1868 election result, Republicans had even better cause to support black suffrage. In 1869, the Fifteenth Amendment was introduced. (It was ratified in 1870.) This stated that, 'The right to vote should not be denied … on account of race, colour or previous conditions of servitude.'

To Democrats, this seemed a revolutionary measure: the crowning act of a Republican plot to promote black equality. Although some feminists were critical of the Amendment because it said nothing about giving women the vote, most Northern reformers hailed the Amendment as the triumphant conclusion to the decades of struggle on behalf of black Americans. A few years earlier, such an Amendment would have been inconceivable. As late as 1868, only eight Northern states allowed blacks to vote. With civil and political equality seemingly assured, most Republicans believed that blacks no longer possessed a claim on the federal government. Their status in society would now depend upon themselves.



SUMMARY DIAGRAM

Congressional Reconstruction 1866–8

5 Reconstruction in the South 1867–77

Key question: Why were Southern states so quickly redeemed?

Following the Military Reconstruction Act all the ex-Confederate states, except Tennessee, were under military rule before being eventually readmitted to the Union. Given that there were never more than 20,000 troops in the whole of the South, the extent to which the region was under the heel of a 'military despotism' should not be exaggerated. Moreover, military rule was short lived.

From the autumn of 1867 onwards, Southern Republicans produced the necessary constitutions and in every state, except Virginia, took over the first restored state governments. By mid-1868, Republican governments in Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, North Carolina and South Carolina had ratified the Fourteenth Amendment and been received back into the Union. Texas, Virginia, Georgia and Mississippi were re-admitted in 1870.

While so-called radical governments in the South frequently depended on the support of federal troops, Southern Republicans in 1867–8 did have a reasonable, indeed often considerable, amount of popular support and thus a democratic mandate to rule. Nevertheless, the Republicans faced fierce opposition from Democrats who sought to **redeem** their states.

KEY TERM

Redeem To restore to white rule.

Black Reconstruction?

To what extent did blacks control 'Black Reconstruction'?

Professor William Dunning in the early twentieth century referred to the period of radical/Republican rule as 'Black Reconstruction'. He thought the new governments represented the worst elements in Southern society – illiterate blacks, self-seeking **carpetbaggers** and renegade **scalawags** – given power by a vengeance-seeking Republican Congress. Dunning depicted 'Black Reconstruction' as essentially undemocratic, with the Republicans ruling against the will of a disfranchised white majority.

However, most of Dunning's views have been challenged, including the very term 'Black Reconstruction', which implies that blacks dominated the Reconstruction process. This was at best a half-truth.

KEY TERM

Carpetbaggers Northern whites who settled in the South. (A carpetbag was the suitcase of the time.)

Scalawags Southern whites who supported the Republican Party.

Black power?

Black Southerners certainly wielded some political power. Having been given the vote, most blacks were determined to use it and large numbers flocked to join the Union League, which became an important arm of the Republican Party in the South. In South Carolina and Mississippi, black voters constituted a real majority of the electorate. In three other states (by September 1867) black voters outnumbered whites because so many rebels were disenfranchised. The result was that in the two decades after 1867, Southern blacks were elected to local, state and national office. Two black senators and fifteen black Representatives were elected to Congress before 1877. At state level, African Americans had even more power. In 1873, South Carolina's House of Representatives had 123 members. Only 23 of them were white.

SOURCE A

James Pike of Maine, one of the most famous political journalists of his day, writing of the South Carolina House of Representatives in 1873.

The Speaker is black, the Clerk is black, the door-keepers are black, the little pages are black, the Chairman of the Ways and Means is black, and the chaplain is coal-black … the body is almost literally a Black Parliament, and it is the only one on the face of the earth which is the representative of a white constituency … [Seven years ago] these men were raising corn and cotton under the whip of the overseer. Today they are raising points of order and privilege. They find they can raise one as well as the other. They prefer the latter. It is easier and better paid … It means escape and defense from old oppressors. It means liberty.'

Does James Pike seem to support or oppose political developments in South Carolina in Source A? ?

While this was a revolutionary break with the past, black political influence never reflected black numbers. Few of the top positions in state governments went to blacks. The majority of black officeholders were local officials, for example justices of the peace. But even at this level blacks did not hold a proportionate share of offices. Black leaders increasingly baulked at the fact that they were merely junior partners in white-dominated Republican coalitions.

Why was black power limited?

The lack of black experience, education and organisation, and divisions within the black community, particularly between free-born blacks and ex-slaves, helps to explain why black officeholders did not equate with black voters. But perhaps the main reason was the fact that blacks were a minority in most states. If Republican governments were to be elected, the Republicans needed to win some white support. Assured of black votes, the Republican Party often put forward white candidates for office hoping to attract more white voters. Moreover, many white Republicans privately shared the Democrat view that blacks were not competent to govern.

How well did black politicians perform?

The excesses of the Reconstruction governments were invariably blamed on black members, even though power in Southern states remained largely in white control. In reality, those blacks who came to office performed as well – and as badly – as whites. Most were moderates who displayed little vindictiveness towards whites. Few showed much enthusiasm for disfranchising ex-Confederates and banning them from state politics. Nor did most display any determination to confiscate plantation land and redistribute it to freedmen. They were aware that such a policy would alienate white Southerners who Republicans were desperately seeking to attract.

Carpetbaggers

If the notion that radical Reconstruction was imposed on the South by blacks is wrong, so also is the notion that it was controlled by Northerners who sought to profit at the South's expense. Relatively few Northerners actually settled in the South: in no state did they constitute 2 per cent of the total population. Nor were they set on fleecing the South economically. Many were teachers, clergy, officers of the Freedmen Bureau or agents of the various benevolent societies engaged in aiding ex-slaves. Some were army veterans who had served in the South, liked what they saw and were determined to remain there. Others were lawyers, businessmen and newspaper editors who headed South (often taking considerable capital with them) hoping for personal advancement. Most supported the Republican Party because they believed that Republican policies were best for both the country and the South.

Scalawags

Without winning some support from Southern-born whites, few Republican governments would have been elected. The scalawags are difficult to categorise: they came from diverse backgrounds and voted Republican for a variety of reasons. Some were rich planters, merchants and industrialists who had once been Whigs. Others were self-sufficient farmers, usually from upland areas, many of whom had opposed the Confederacy. Most scalawags did not support full racial equality. The alliance with blacks was a marriage of

convenience. They realised that if they were to have any chance of maintaining political control, they must retain the black vote.

Corruption and inefficiency

Southern Democrats claimed that Republican rule was hugely corrupt and inefficient. Historians have found plenty of evidence to collaborate this charge:

- Many Republican politicians used their powers of patronage to benefit both themselves and their supporters.
- Bribery, especially by railway companies, was commonplace.
- Southern state debts multiplied and taxes sharply increased.
- The Freedmen Bureau, seen as a Republican-sponsored organisation, was similarly indicted (then and since) for being corrupt and for encouraging a dependency culture.

However, historians now point out that the late 1860s and 1870s saw corruption and inefficiency everywhere in the USA. Corruption in the South did not begin to compare with that in the city of New York. Moreover, there had been massive corruption in Southern state governments pre-1861 and similar corruption after the states were 'redeemed'.

Southern Republican governments had little option but to raise and spend large sums of money. Most inherited empty treasuries and large public debts. Much of the Southern transportation system had been destroyed during the war. Public buildings needed to be repaired. Schools, hospitals, orphanages and asylums had to be built for blacks as well as whites. The fact that new schools, hospitals and prisons were built indicates that the money spent was not always wasted. Historians have also come to the defence of the Freedmen Bureau, which seems to have had a good record in terms of providing poor blacks and poor whites with basic health care and education.

Economic Reconstruction

How successful was economic reconstruction?

From 1867 to 1873, the South benefited from general prosperity and from high cotton prices. Railroads were rebuilt and there was an increase in textile – and other – manufacturing. But promising as this was, it did not keep pace with industrial progress elsewhere. Short of cash and credit, the South remained an essentially agricultural region, heavily dependent on cotton. In many parts of the South the old plantations remained, sometimes with new owners, sometimes not. Blacks continued to do most of the hard labour (see pages 245–6).

In the early 1870s, a world-wide glut of cotton led to a disastrous fall in prices which resulted in most small farmers being in a perpetual state of indebtedness to landowners and local storekeepers. They, in turn, were often in debt to Southern merchants and bankers who themselves were in debt to Northern banks. These piled-up debts ensured that the South remained

mainly a one-crop economy because everyone pressed the people below to produce crops – chiefly cotton – that had a ready market value. The South did remarkably well in terms of total cotton output. In 1860, it had produced about 4.5 million bales of cotton. By 1880 it produced over 6.3 million bales. But increased production simply added to the cotton glut; consequently, prices continued to tumble. And the only way for farmers to make ends meet was to try and produce more.

The result was that the South became the poorest region in the USA. In 1860, the Southern states produced 30 per cent of the nation's wealth. In 1870, they produced only 12 per cent. In 1860 the average white Southerner's income was similar to that of the average Northerner. By 1870, Southern income had fallen to less than two-fifths that of Northerners. The Republican governments in the South were victims rather than perpetrators of this situation – a situation which continued long after the states had been redeemed. Nevertheless they can be criticised. Too much reliance was placed on railroad building. Instead of bringing prosperity, state investment in railroads led to ever-rising debts, higher taxes and often seedy corruption.

Why did most Southern whites oppose Republican reconstruction?

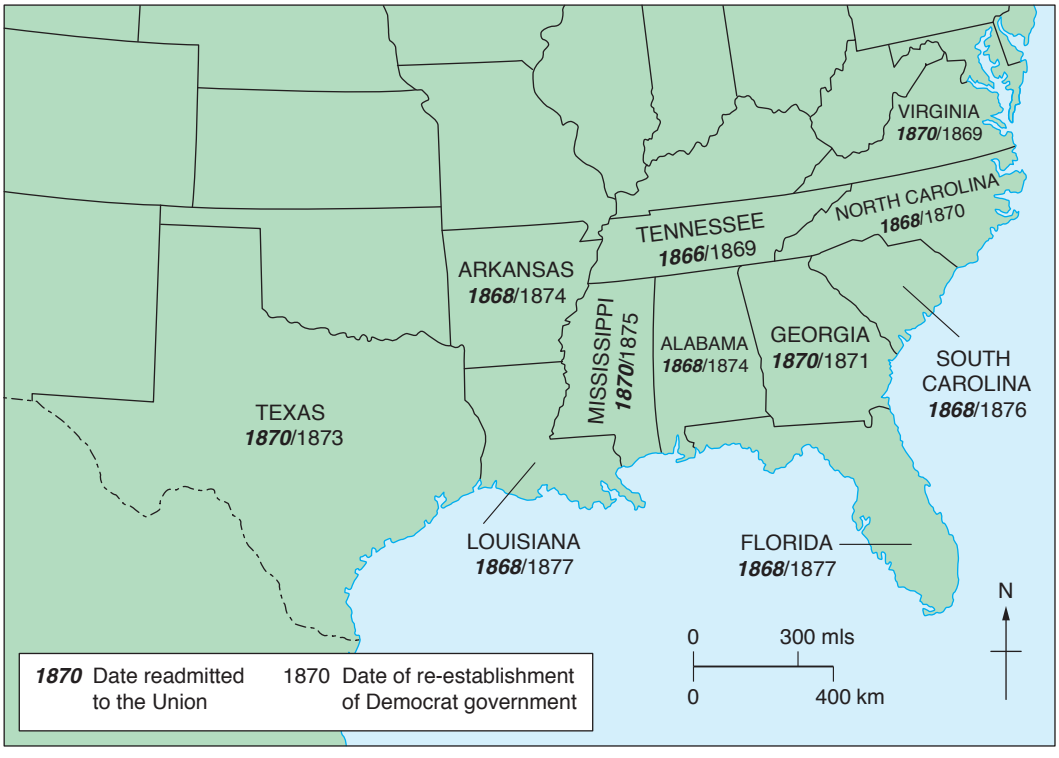
White resistance

Republican rule sparked a vigorous backlash as Southern whites determined to recover political ascendancy.

The Ku Klux Klan

Violence had been endemic in parts of the South since 1865. But radical Reconstruction stimulated its growth. In 1866, paramilitary groups formed in most Southern states to fight for white rights. The most successful was the Ku Klux Klan (from 'kuklos' – the Greek for 'circle'). Established in Tennessee and led for a time by war hero Nathan Bedford Forrest, the Klan spread rapidly in the years 1868–71: by 1870 Forrest claimed there were over 500,000 Klansmen in the South as a whole. Clad in white robes and hoods, Klansmen sought to destroy Republican political organisations by intimidation and physical force. The KKK drew support from all sections of the white community and was often encouraged in its violent actions by 'respectable' Southern Democrat leaders.

In the early twentieth century, historians saw the Klan as a natural reaction to 'Black Republican' rule. Indeed, it was lavished with praise in Thomas Dixon's novel *The Clansman* (subsequently adapted for the cinema in D.W. Griffith's 1915 epic, *The Birth of a Nation*). Recent historians have been far more critical of its terrorist activities, which reached their peak in the years 1869–71. Blacks who held public office were particular targets. So were black schools and churches. Southern Republican governments tried to proscribe the Klan's activities by introducing laws which banned people from joining organisations that disturbed the peace. Some states even outlawed the wearing of masks in public. But most states found it hard to enforce the laws.



The map shows the dates when Southern states rejoined the Union and when Democrat governments were elected

Nor could they easily deal with Klan violence. When Klan suspects were arrested, witnesses were usually reluctant to testify and if there was a Klansman on a jury it was impossible to convict.

Force Acts

Some state governors appealed to Congress for help. Thus, in 1870–1, Congress passed three Force Acts, authorising President Grant to use the army to break up the Klan. Heavy penalties were imposed on those who used force, bribery or intimidation to hinder or prevent anyone from voting. Grant showed he meant business, imposing martial law in several parts of the South. Hundreds of suspected Klansmen were imprisoned. While this reduced Klan terrorism, violence and intimidation continued after 1872, especially in Louisiana, Mississippi and South Carolina – states still under Republican control.

Detachments of ex-Confederate soldiers often accompanied Democrat speakers to political rallies and paraded through black areas. These shows of strength, coupled with sporadic attacks on opponents, made it difficult for Republicans to campaign and vote in some Southern states.

When was the South redeemed?

The South 'redeemed'

Radical Reconstruction was a limited process. In many Southern states it was over almost before it began. Tennessee was under Democrat control by 1869; Virginia and North Carolina were redeemed in 1870; Georgia in 1871; Texas in 1873; Arkansas and Alabama in 1874; and Mississippi in 1875. By 1876, only Louisiana, Florida and South Carolina were still – theoretically – under Republican control. The Democrat – or **Bourbon** – regimes, which replaced the Republican governments, shared a commitment to reducing:

- the political, social and economic power of blacks
- the scope and expense of government
- taxes.

KEY TERM

Bourbon A derogatory term given to Southern Democratic administrations by their opponents. In nineteenth-century France, Bourbons were supporters of the French royal family who wished to restore the old regime and sought to perpetuate ancient values.

Southern Republican problems

Several factors played a part in Republican defeat. While most historians have emphasised the importance of intimidation, others have stressed the destructive effect of factionalism within the Republican Party at state and local level. Bitter internal feuds, which often centred on the spoils of office rather than actual policy, were a luxury Republicans could ill afford. While black and white Republicans quarrelled, there was also inter-black and inter-white rivalry.

Historian John Hope Franklin suggested that a Republican coalition might have survived had the party been able to unite over economic and social policy. He argued that the Republicans' best chance of success was to present themselves as the poor man's party, championing policies that appealed to poverty-stricken whites and blacks. But most Republican leaders had no wish to embark on radical policies which were likely to prevent outside capital being attracted to the South and which would end all hope of winning 'respectable' white support.

As it was, Republican fiscal policies at state level did not assist the party's cause. Heavy taxation helped to drive white farmers from the party. Nor were the Republicans helped by the economic depression which started in 1873:

- Cotton prices fell by nearly 50 per cent.
- Most railroad building ceased.
- Many long-established Southern industries were forced into bankruptcy (for example, the Tredegar Iron Works).

Those Republican regimes still in power were usually blamed for people's misfortunes.

Arguably, Southern Republicans were betrayed by the Northern wing of the party. Radical influence within the party declined as radical leaders died or retired. Most Northern Republicans, who had never been radicals, did not want to see federal power used aggressively to over-rule states' rights. Like most Americans at the time, they believed that liberty meant freedom from

government intervention, not the use of government power to help minority groups. By the early 1870s, many Republicans felt the time had come to leave the South to sort out its own problems.

President Grant

Grant's administration has often been blamed for lacking commitment, vision and clear aims with regard to Reconstruction. This is not altogether fair. Grant took tough action against the Ku Klux Klan. However, he was anxious to end federal government involvement in the South and ready to build bridges with white Southerners. Two actions in 1872 symbolised this desire for accommodation:

- The Amnesty Act resulted in 150,000 ex-Confederates having their rights returned.
- The Freedmen's Bureau was allowed to collapse.

In 1872, Grant easily defeated the **Liberal Republican** candidate Horace Greeley (who was reluctantly supported by the Democrats, who realised they had no chance of defeating Grant with a candidate of their own) in the presidential election, winning over 55 per cent of the popular vote. Unfortunately, Grant's second term was dominated by two issues: the economic depression and a number of political scandals involving some of Grant's close associates, which damaged his standing.

KEY TERM

Liberal Republican This was a new party which came into existence in 1872, largely because of dissatisfaction with Grant. While some major Northern Republican figures joined the party, it had little support from Republican rank and file. The party quickly disappeared after 1872.

The congressional situation

In the 1874 mid-term elections, the Democrats won control of the House of Representatives. Thereafter Congress showed little inclination to assist Southern Republicans. The last measure that aimed to help Southern blacks was the 1875 Civil Rights Act. Supposedly designed to prevent discrimination by hotels, theatres and railroads, it was little more than a broad assertion of principle and had little impact.

The situation by the mid-1870s

Although other factors played a part, the end of radical Reconstruction was almost inevitable given that whites were the majority in most Southern states. The two main political parties had distinct racial identities. The Democrat Party was the white party; the Republican Party the black party. The notion that a strong Republican Party might have been founded on policies that appealed to poor whites and blacks is probably a delusion. The reality was that (for racist reasons) few poor whites identified with poor blacks.

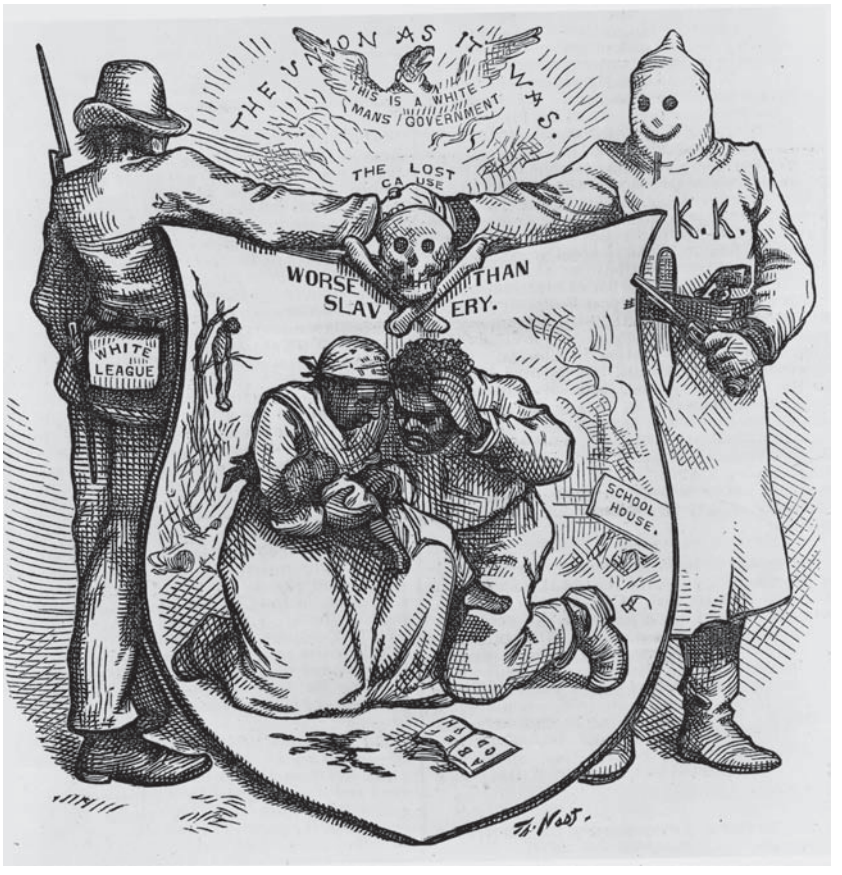
Given that race was the dominant issue, many of the election campaigns in the South in the 1870s were ugly and few elections were conducted fairly. White Southerners organised new paramilitary groups – Rifle Clubs, Red Shirts, White Leagues – the ostensible aim of which was to maintain public order. Their real mission, however, was to overthrow Republican governments and banish blacks from public life. Unlike the Klan, these groups drilled and paraded openly. On election days, armed whites did their

best to turn blacks away from the polls. Republican leaders, by contrast, tried to ensure that blacks voted – often several times!

? What point is Source B seeking to make?

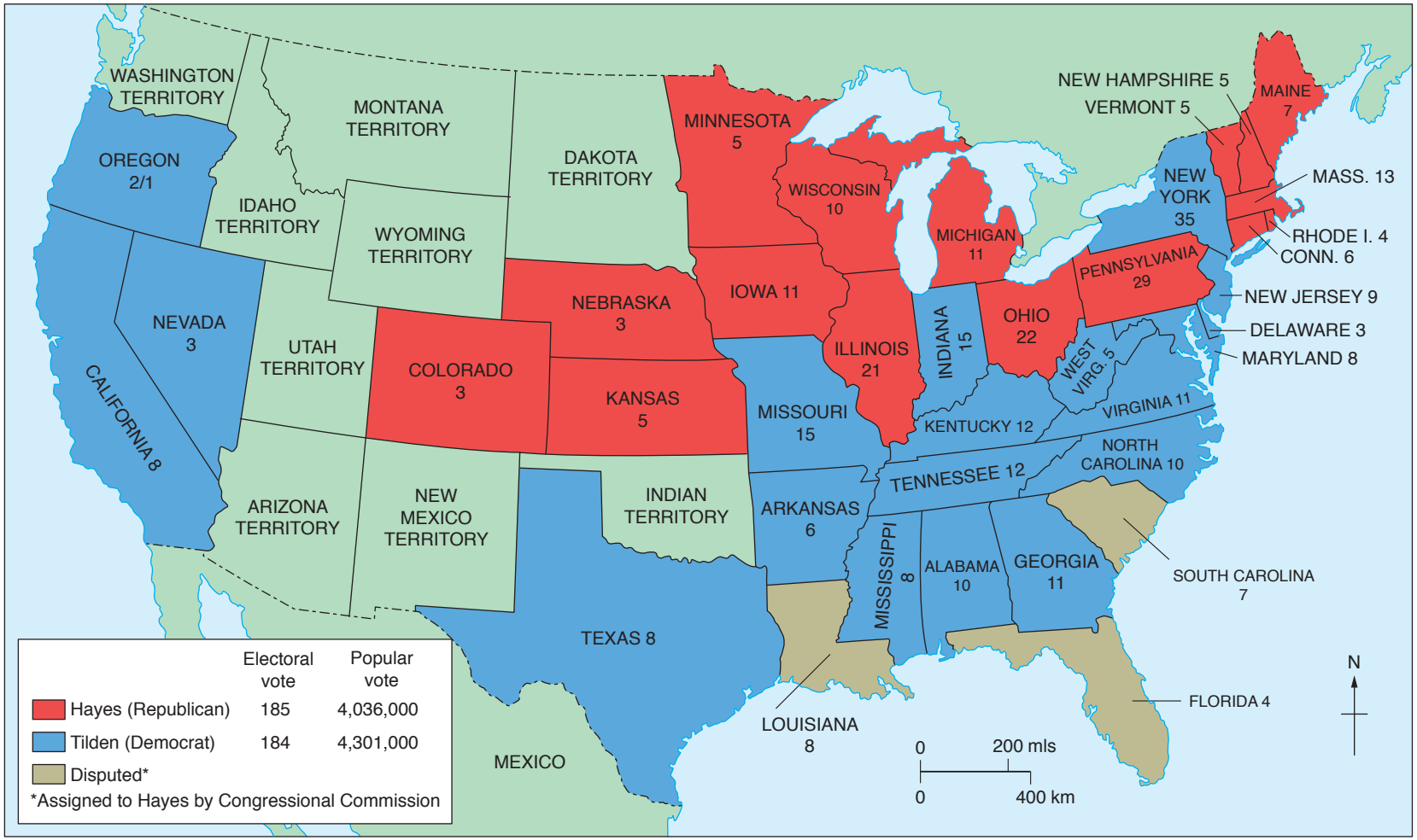
SOURCE B

The White League and the Klan. The drawing from 1874 shows members of these organisations joining hands over a terrified black family.



The situation in Louisiana and Mississippi

Events in Louisiana were typical of events throughout the Deep South. Every election in the state between 1868 and 1876 was marred by violence and fraud. After 1872, two governments claimed legitimacy in the state. A Republican regime, elected by blacks and protected by the federal army and black militia units, was the legitimate government. But a Democrat government, elected by whites and aided by the White League, controlled much of the countryside. Violence was common. Thirty people died in September 1874 in a battle between the White League and the state militia. In 1874, the Republicans stayed in power by throwing out the results from many Democratic areas. Grant reluctantly sent troops to prop up Louisiana's corrupt Republican regime.



US election results in 1876

Strangely, Grant did nothing to help the Republican government in Mississippi, where there was similar violence. Mississippi Democrats intimidated any white man not enrolled in a Democrat club. The result was that Mississippi was redeemed in 1875. Historian Eric Foner thinks that Grant's failure to intervene in Mississippi was a 'milestone in the retreat from Reconstruction'.

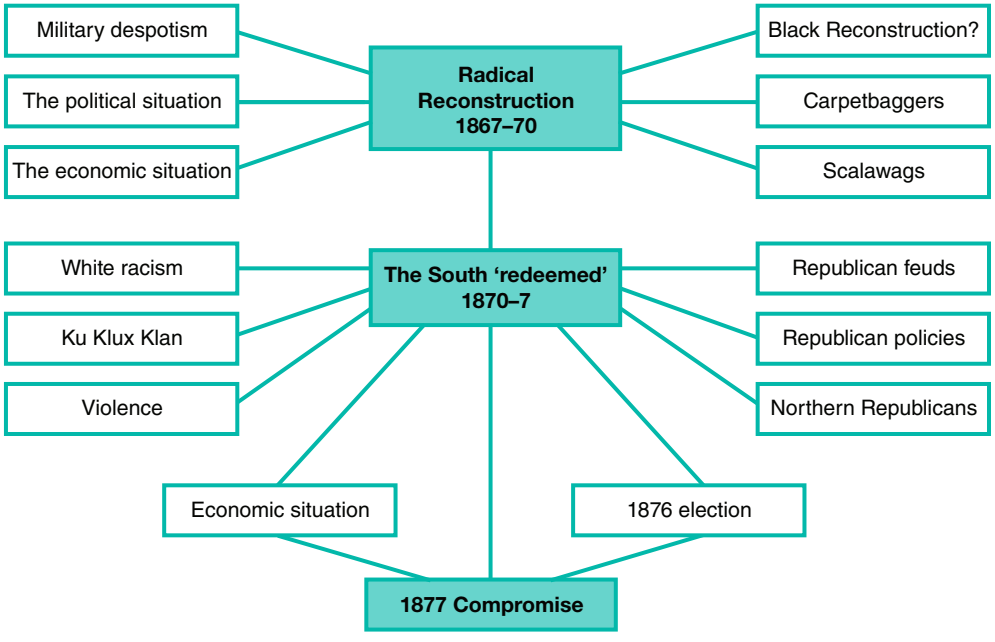
The 1876 presidential election

Even though most states had been redeemed well before, the 1876 presidential election is often seen as the end of Reconstruction. The Republican candidate was Rutherford B. Hayes. The Democrats chose Samuel Tilden. In November 1876, it was clear that Tilden, helped by the effects of economic depression, had won the popular vote, gaining 4,284,000 votes to Hayes' 4,037,000. But presidential elections are determined by the electoral college, not by the popular vote. Tilden had 184 electoral college votes to Hayes' 165. However, the voting returns from Oregon, South Carolina, Louisiana and Florida – with twenty electoral college votes between them – were contested. If all twenty votes went to Hayes he would win.

There was never much doubt that Oregon's votes would go to Hayes. The real problem lay in the South. Democrats justifiably claimed that Republicans had manipulated the vote and that many blacks had voted umpteen times. Republicans claimed, with equal justification, that blacks had been intimidated from voting. It was – and is – impossible to know how far Democratic intimidation offset Republican fraud. The dispute lingered on over the winter. Some Southerners talked of fighting a new civil war to ensure that Tilden became president. But behind the scenes powerful forces worked for a settlement. Eventually Congress established a commission to review the election returns. Eight commissioners were Republicans; seven were Democrats. By votes of eight to seven the commission awarded all the disputed elections to Hayes.

The 1877 Compromise?

The 1877 Compromise ended the crisis. While nothing was agreed in writing, the Compromise seems to have been as follows: the Democrats would accept Hayes as president. Hayes, in return, would withdraw all troops from the South, recognise Democratic governments in the three disputed states, appoint a Southerner to his cabinet and look kindly on Southern railroad interests. Hayes claimed that he had made no concessions to the South. Whatever had – or had not – been agreed, he did withdraw troops from the South with the result that South Carolina, Louisiana and Florida immediately fell under Democrat control. Thus, by 1877, all the ex-Confederate states had returned to white rule. Hayes continued his policy of conciliation, appointing a Southerner to his cabinet and visiting the South on a goodwill tour. While Hayes's presidency is usually seen as marking the end of Reconstruction, his actions did not mark an abrupt change in policy. They only confirmed what had been done earlier by Congress or by Grant.



SUMMARY DIAGRAM

Reconstruction in the South 1867–77

6 The impact of the Civil War

Key question: *Was the Civil War the USA's second revolution?*

In March 1865, Lincoln talked of the 'fundamental and astounding' changes which had occurred as a result of the war. Many contemporaries agreed. In 1869, historian George Ticknor declared that the Civil War had riven 'a great gulf between what happened before in our century and what has happened since or what is likely to happen hereafter. It does not seem to me as if I were living in the country in which I was born.' Historians continue to debate whether the Civil War was America's second revolution. (The War of Independence is seen as the first.)

The emancipation of the slaves

Did emancipation amount to a revolution?

The Civil War resulted in the emancipation of 4 million slaves. Given Southern commitment to slavery, it seems unlikely that it would have withered and died of its own accord. The confiscation of the principal form of

property in one-third of the country was without parallel in US history. Emancipation had a major impact on both slaveholder and slave. By the early 1870s, blacks were elevated (in theory) to civil equality with whites.

However, emancipation had little practical impact on most – Northern – Americans. Moreover, blacks remained the poorest ethnic group and by 1900 had lost most of their civil and political rights (see pages 247–50).

Did the war change the emphasis of the Constitution?

The balance of government

Arguably, the war changed the whole emphasis of the Constitution, shifting the balance of the system in a federal direction at the expense of states' rights. During the war, the federal government asserted its power in ways unimaginable in 1861:

- It mobilised hundreds of thousands of men.
- It levied new sources of revenue.
- It set up a national bank and issued a paper currency.

The changes wrought by the war, it is often implied, were not undone, largely because the war resulted in a change in ideology. This claim can (apparently) be substantiated by examination of changes to the Constitution. The first ten Amendments had set out to limit federal authority. But after 1865, six of the next seven Amendments empowered the federal government to act. Congress now had the power to end slavery (Thirteenth Amendment), protect civil rights (Fourteenth Amendment) and end racial discrimination in voting (Fifteenth Amendment).

However, many would argue that the war years were an aberration:

- It was inevitable that during the conflict federal power would increase. (Some think it is surprising how limited that increase was.)
- After the war there was a rapid return to normalcy and for the rest of the nineteenth century the federal government had a minimal impact on the lives of Americans.
- Belief in states' rights remained articles of faith of most Americans – not just Southerners.
- Given that successive federal governments lacked the will to enforce the principles contained in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, state power was not effectively reduced.

What were the economic effects of the war?

The economic effects

Historian Charles Beard saw the war as the triumph of the forces of industrialism over plantation agriculture. The war, in Beard's view, was 'a social cataclysm … making vast changes in the arrangements of classes, in the distribution of wealth, in the course of industrial development.' While most historians today regard such views as far too sweeping, some think the war did nourish the growth of business enterprise, ensuring that the USA became the world's greatest economic force. During the war the Republicans

passed a broad spectrum of laws which underpinned the country's future economic growth: higher tariffs, a national banking system and government loans to build a transcontinental railway. The demands of the war itself may also have encouraged the growth of big business. Many of the great industrialists of the late nineteenth century were set on the path to wealth by the war. Nor did they forget the lessons it taught, especially the advantage of large-scale enterprise.

However, there are many counter-arguments to the notion that the war resulted in major economic change:

- The USA was already a great economic power, second only to Britain, in 1861.
- The crucial innovations in transport, agriculture and manufacturing began well before 1861. The war produced no fundamental change of direction.
- It is possible that the war retarded the country's economic expansion. The 1860s show up poorly in statistical terms when measured against earlier and later decades.
- To argue that the war transferred economic and political power into the hands of industrial capitalists is simplistic. If the big manufacturers proved to be the chief economic beneficiaries of the war (and this is debatable), their victory was an incidental rather than a planned result of the conflict.

The social effects

How did the war affect US society?

The emancipation of slaves apart, the war produced no major upheaval in the social order. If it had opened up doors of opportunity for women, those doors were quickly closed. Nor did the loss of 620,000 men have much effect. Natural increase and immigration ensured that by 1870 the American population far exceeded that of 1860.

The political effects

What were the war's main political results?

The main political result of the war was the effect it had on the sectional balance of power. Between 1789 and 1861, a Southern slaveholder had been president of the USA for 49 years; 23 of the 36 speakers of the House of Representatives had been Southerners; and the Supreme Court had always had a Southern majority. After the war a century passed before a resident of an ex-Confederate state was elected president; for 50 years none of the speakers came from the South; and only five of the 26 Supreme Court justices appointed during the next 50 years were Southerners. However, whether this change merits the label of revolution is debatable. Arguably Northern dominance would have happened anyway.

Conclusion

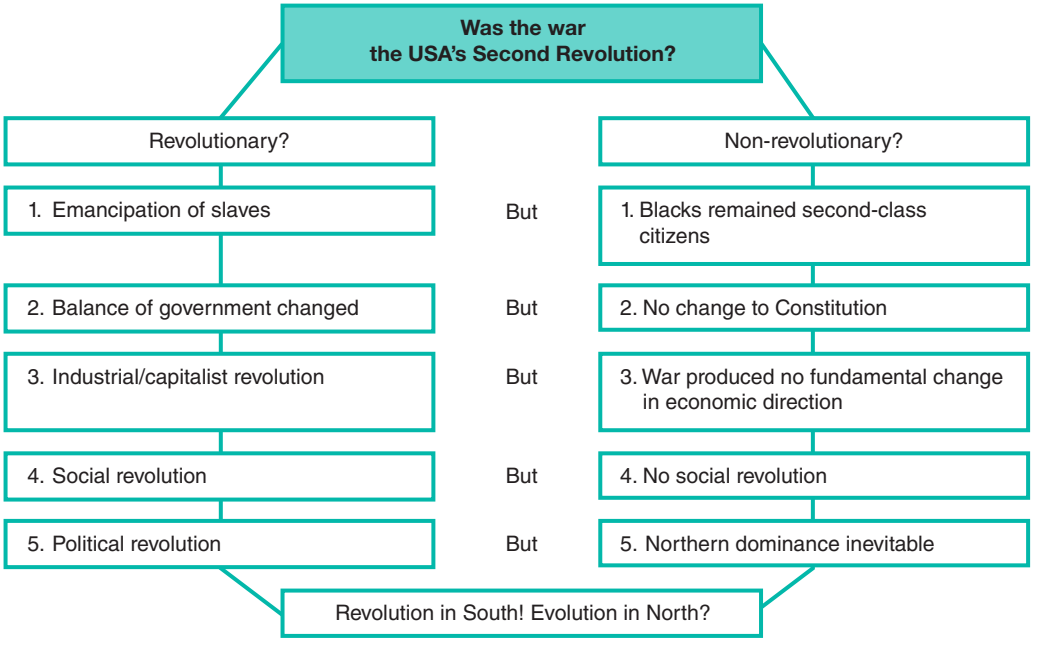
What were the main changes wrought by the Civil War?

Had the Confederacy won, the Civil War would have been one of the great turning points in modern history. Indeed, the long-term implications of a Confederate victory for both the USA and the world are so far-reaching as to

be incalculable. Union victory meant in effect that the *status quo* was preserved – hardly revolutionary! Indeed, in many respects the war scarcely affected the deeper currents of US economic, social and political development.

Yet many of those who lived through the war shared a sense of having lived through events that had radically changed their world. Mark Twain, for example, wrote that the war had 'uprooted institutions that were centuries old, changed the politics of a people [and] transformed the social life of half the country'. Twain was surely correct to stress that the war had a massive impact on 'half' the country. While it is easier to see continuity than revolution in the North, the war had a dramatic impact on the South. By 1865, slavery was gone and the South had lost much of its economic and political power.

Southern whites salvaged what they could from the wreck of defeat and their counter-revolution had some success. By 1877, all the Southern states had white-controlled governments. Notwithstanding the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, Southern blacks did not have equal civil rights until the second half of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, the ending of slavery and the passing of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments were extraordinary developments in terms of what might have been anticipated in 1861. In that sense, the changes wrought by the war were revolutionary.



SUMMARY DIAGRAM

The impact of the Civil War

Chapter summary

Reconstruction

Reconstruction was not something which started at the war's end in 1865. In a sense the process began with the start of the war in 1861. However, apart from the Emancipation Proclamation and the Thirteenth Amendment, little had been set in stone by 1865. Lincoln's assassination did not help matters. His successor, Andrew Johnson, soon fell out with Congress, which proceeded to introduce its own Reconstruction programme. From 1865 to the withdrawal of US army troops from former Confederate states in 1877, the federal government succeeded in bringing back the seceded states into the Union and attempted to restructure Southern political institutions and society to various degrees. Few Americans in the South approved of the Reconstruction process. White Southerners believed that they had been deprived of their democratic rights and placed under the thumb of corrupt, inefficient and illegitimate Republican governments, which were ultimately dependent on military force. Black Southerners' hopes and expectations in 1865 had not been realised. Moreover, by 1877 white Democratic administrations controlled all the former Confederate states. Debates about whether the process of Reconstruction was a success or failure look set to continue.

Examination advice

How to answer 'why' questions

Questions that ask why are prompting you to consider a variety of explanations. Each of these will need to be explained in full. It is also possible to question the question. This means that you can disagree with the basic premise of the question. If so, you must present full counter-arguments and be prepared to expound on these.

Example

Why did Reconstruction fail to address the root causes of the Civil War?

1 In the case of this specific question, you should be prepared to write about several reasons for the failures of Reconstruction and how these connect to the causes of the Civil War. In many respects, this is a very complicated question because you need to also discuss what exactly the root causes of the Civil War were. Successful responses to this essay will make very clear the connection between the causes of the Civil War and the failures of Reconstruction.

As possible topics to address in your essay, you might investigate how Reconstruction was often half-hearted in dealing with the social position of African Americans. You could also explore the political atmosphere after the Civil War ended. How was the South to be reintegrated or 'redeemed' into the United States? What role would African Americans assume? To what extent were Northerners interested in the situation of the newly freed blacks?

An alternative approach to answering the question would be to challenge the question. You could take the point of view that the causes of the war were addressed by Reconstruction. In this case, you must provide detailed supporting evidence to support your position.

2 First, take at least five minutes to write a short outline. In your outline make a list of the main causes of the war and a list of reasons why Reconstruction failed. This is key here. Your whole argument hinges on how Reconstruction did not, in fact, deal with the causes of the Civil War. An example of an outline for an answer to this question might be:

Main causes of the Civil War:

- *Extension of slavery in new states and territories.*
- *The institution of slavery and Southern resistance to Northern pressure.*
- *The development of a culture distinct from the rest of the nation.*
- *States' rights in terms of remaining part of the Union.*
- *Election of Abraham Lincoln and political divisions.*
- *White economic and political control of African Americans.*
- *Federal government's unwillingness to alter race relations.*

Failures of Reconstruction:

- *While slavery did end, the condition of many former slaves remained tenuous.*
- *Not enough time or resources were devoted to implementing fully Reconstruction.*
- *Slave states were redeemed quickly without sufficient safeguards to prevent abuse of freed blacks.*
- *Because Democrats took control of the House of Representatives in 1874, there was little political will to protect Black Republicans in the South.*
- *Whites continued to control the economy and soon regained political mastery.*

3 In your introduction, you should discuss both the causes of the Civil War and what Reconstruction accomplished. The differences between these two should be the core of your essay. An example of a good introduction is given below.

The causes of the war between the states were many. For some, states' rights were the primary issue while others argued that it was paramount to preserve slavery as a viable economic and social system. When the Republican from Illinois, Abraham Lincoln, was elected president in 1860, the South seceded. Reconstruction, the policy to reintegrate the South into the Union after the Civil War, attempted to address some of the causes of the war. However, its existence from the end of the war until 1877 did not solve all of the core issues. Slavery was abolished but the position of African Americans did not improve significantly. Why Reconstruction failed to take into account the causes of the war was primarily because the nation remained racially intolerant and there

existed a desire to move on from the most divisive event in the history of the United States. In some cases, this meant a relatively rapid move to redeem the secessionist South at the expense of the civil rights of the former slaves.

4 The body of your essay needs to investigate both the reasons for the Civil War and why the aftermath of the war might be considered half-hearted and ineffectual. Reconstruction was brief but did bring back or redeem states that had broken away from the Union. Some might argue that this was accomplished at the expense of the African Americans. One approach here could be to detail the status of blacks as slaves in the South prior to the Civil War and what changed after the Civil War. One could suggest that blacks continued to be second-class citizens. Alternatively, you could take issue with the question and suggest that real advances were made. In other words, blacks did realise significant improvements with the passage of Constitutional amendments (Thirteen–Fifteen) that ended slavery and guaranteed the right to citizenship and suffrage.

5 In the conclusion, you should tie together the ideas you have explored and how they relate directly to the notion that Reconstruction did not significantly address the major issues that led to civil war. An example of a good concluding paragraph is given below.

The unwillingness of the Congress to address fully or protect the civil status of black Americans, especially after the Democrats regained control of the House of Representatives in 1874, represented a failure of Reconstruction. The introduction of weak institutions and the rapidity of redemption of Southern states led to the re-imposition of severe labour and cultural restrictions. Congress, to some extent, wished to forgive and forget the bloodiest chapter in US history. However, this meant that the central issues behind the Civil War were forgotten.

6 Now try writing a complete answer to the question following the advice above.



Examination practice

Below are two exam-style questions for you to practise on this topic.

1 To what extent was Reconstruction a political and economic success? (For guidance on how to answer 'to what extent' questions, see page 160.)

2 Why were Southern states so quickly redeemed?

CHAPTER 9

African Americans in the Civil War and the New South

African Americans played an important role in ensuring Union victory and thus ensuring that slavery in the USA came to an end. The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments seemed to guarantee freedmen equal rights with white Americans. However, within a generation of 1865, African Americans were very much second-class citizens. This chapter will examine how this came about by examining the following key questions:

- What impact did African Americans have on the Civil War?
- To what extent were African Americans second-class citizens in the period 1865–77?
- How did the position of African Americans deteriorate after 1877?
- Was Reconstruction a tragic failure?

1 The African American war effort

Key question: *What impact did African Americans have on the Civil War?*

The Civil War had a considerable impact on African Americans. What impact did African Americans have on the Civil War?

How significant was the African American war effort?

The recruitment of black soldiers

From the start of the war Lincoln faced strong and conflicting pressure on the question of whether to enlist blacks in the Union army. Initially, most Northerners, hating the notion of blacks fighting against whites, opposed black recruitment. Black leaders and abolitionists, however, were anxious that African Americans should fight in a war that was likely to destroy slavery. Pointing out that blacks were serving in the Union navy, they pushed for similar enlistment of black soldiers. 'This is no time to fight with one hand, when both are needed', declared black leader Frederick Douglass: 'this is no time to fight with your white hand and allow your black hand to remain tied'.

The situation 1861–2

Lincoln, anxious to preserve Northern unity, initially stood firm against black recruitment. This did not prevent some attempts to recruit black soldiers.

General Hunter, for example, raised a regiment of black volunteers on the Sea Islands (off South Carolina) in early 1862. Receiving no financial support from the War Department, Hunter was forced to disband his regiment. The July 1862 Confiscation Act (see page 204) gave Lincoln the power to use ex-slaves as a military force but, anxious not to alienate white Northerners, he interpreted this narrowly, insisting that blacks should simply be employed as army labourers, not front-line troops.

In August 1862, Secretary of War Stanton authorised the creation of a regiment of 5,000 black troops to be recruited in Union-occupied areas of Louisiana. Lincoln did not object, and in September the first official regiment of blacks was mustered into Union service. After the Emancipation Proclamation, Lincoln's resistance abated and there was a large influx of blacks into the Union army. As in so many respects, Lincoln was in tune with Northern opinion. Given the mounting casualty lists there was far more support for black soldiers than there had been in 1861.

Of the 46,000 free blacks of military age in the North, 33,000 joined Union armies. Most black troops, however, were ex-slaves. Some 100,000 were recruited from the Confederacy. Another 42,000 slaves from Kentucky, Delaware, Maryland and Missouri also enlisted. (This was the swiftest way for border state slaves to get their freedom.) In June 1863, black troops acquitted themselves well at Milliken's Bend, Louisiana. In July, the black 54th Massachusetts regiment suffered 40 per cent casualties in an assault on Fort Wagner, South Carolina. Many black regiments took part in the 1864–5 fighting around Petersburg.

Racial discrimination in the Union army

Within the Union army there was considerable racial discrimination. Regiments were strictly segregated. Black regiments were invariably



Company E of the Fourth Colored Infantry photographed in 1865

commanded by white officers. By 1865 scarcely 100 black soldiers had become officers. Black regiments often received inferior supplies and equipment. What rankled most, however, was the fact that white privates received $13 a month while blacks were only paid $10. In November 1863, some black troops protested about their unequal pay. This protest was seen as 'mutiny' and the sergeant leading it was executed.

Although Stanton was sympathetic to black claims for equal treatment, Lincoln was not convinced. Blacks, he thought, had 'larger motives for being soldiers than white men … they ought to be willing to enter the service upon any condition'. In June 1864, however, Congress did provide equal pay for black soldiers.

Black troops were in greater danger than whites if they were captured. Some rebels boasted that they took no black prisoners and there were occasions when black troops were killed as they tried to surrender (for example, at Fort Pillow, Tennessee in 1864). More often, black prisoners were returned to slavery. Given that the Confederacy was not prepared to exchange black soldiers, Lincoln stopped all prisoner-of-war exchanges in 1863.

The significance of black participation

The fact that blacks had fought for freedom bolstered black confidence and pride. Military service also carried with it an assumption of US citizenship. Douglass commented: 'Once let the black man get upon his person the brass letters US, let him get an eagle on his buttons, and a musket on his shoulder … there is no power on earth which can deny that he has earned the right to citizenship in the United States.'

The impact of black soldiers on the outcome of the war should not be exaggerated. Of the 37,000 black soldiers who died, only 3,000 were killed in combat; most died of disease. Nevertheless, black troops did help the Union war effort at a critical time when whites were increasingly reluctant to fight. In September 1864, Lincoln wrote: 'Any different policy in regard to the colored man [than black recruitment] deprives us of his help and this is more than we can bear … This is not a question of sentiment or taste, but one of physical force which can be measured and estimated as [can] horse power and steam power … Keep it up and you can save the Union. Throw it away and the Union goes with it.' By 1865 there were nearly as many black soldiers in arms against the Confederacy as there were white soldiers defending it.

How much had been done to help Southern blacks by 1865?

Slavery in the Union-occupied South

As the war progressed, the Union army occupied large parts of the South. Some land was confiscated, but far more came into federal hands because Southerners had not paid their taxes or had simply abandoned their property. What to do with this land, coupled with the organisation of its black labour, became points of conflict as ex-slaves, former slaveholders, military commanders and Northern businessmen and reformers all sought in

various ways to influence the transition to free labour. There was little agreement on the critical issue: would confiscated and abandoned land be sold or otherwise distributed to freedmen?

Freed slaves

Given no firm presidential or Congressional guidance, the situation in the reoccupied areas of the Confederacy was chaotic, varying from place to place and from time to time. Federal agents in the South, especially army officers, instituted their own remedies. The most famous 'rehearsal for Reconstruction' occurred on the Sea Islands, occupied by Union forces in November 1861. Blacks, who pooled their meagre resources, were able to buy plots of land. This well-publicised (albeit small-scale) development was not typical. In most occupied areas plantations were administered by 'superintendents of Negro affairs' or leased to Northern investors whose main purpose was monetary profit. Some plantations were still controlled by Southerners who had taken an oath of allegiance to the Union.

In these circumstances life for most ex-slaves did not change very much (except they were no longer whipped). They continued to work on the same plantations, supervised by white managers. While they were now paid wages, most of the money earned was withheld to pay for food and clothing, and they were forbidden to leave the land on which they worked without permission.

Colonisation schemes

Fearing that blacks and whites could not live peacefully together and that blacks would never be afforded equal opportunities, Lincoln supported the idea of colonising ex-slaves in the Caribbean or Latin America. Several attempts were made to put colonisation schemes into effect. All floundered, largely because few blacks agreed to participate.

Slavery in the Confederacy

How did the war affect slaves in the Confederacy?

Slaves' contribution to the Confederate war effort

Most blacks in the Confederate states remained slaves throughout the war. Given that they comprised more than a third of the Confederacy's population, they made a major contribution to its war effort:

- They worked in factories and mines, maintained the railways and helped to grow crops.
- Many Southern states passed laws enabling them to conscript slaves for military labour. In 1863, the Confederate Congress passed a general impressment law. Slaves played an important military role, erecting fortifications and helping behind the lines.

The impact of the war on slavery

The war had a major impact on slave–master relations. As the conflict intensified, there were fewer white men left to supervise the slaves.

Supervision, therefore, fell to women and young and old men. Most proved less effective taskmasters than their pre-war predecessors. Slaves took advantage of the situation, working less diligently. Slave owners on the coast or in the path of invading Union armies often sent their slaves to safer areas of the Confederacy. Such dislocations undermined traditional authority patterns.

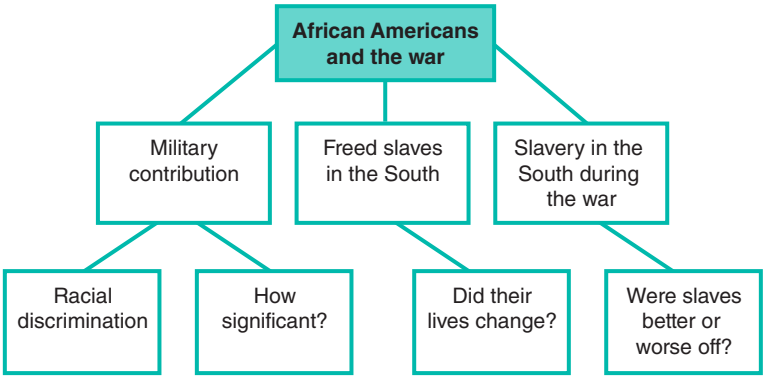
For many slaves the war was a time of great privation. General shortages of goods resulted in planters cutting back on the food and clothing given to slaves. For impressed slaves, military labour was usually harder than on the plantation.

Despite Southern whites' fears, there was no slave rebellion. Aware that freedom was coming, most slaves bided their time. Few showed much loyalty to their owners. Whenever an opportunity came to escape most took it. In the course of the war, some 500,000 slaves fled.

Confederate recruitment of slaves

By 1864, some influential Southerners argued in favour of arming slaves to fight for the Confederacy. Most Southerners opposed the idea. 'Whenever we establish the fact that they are a military race, we destroy our whole theory that they are unfit to be free', said Governor Brown of Georgia. However, in February 1865, Robert E. Lee, desperately short of men, came out in support of arming slaves and the following month the Confederate Congress passed a law providing for the arming of 300,000 slaves.

The measure came too late. A few black companies were raised but not in time to see action. Some historians think that had the Confederacy recruited slaves sooner, it might have won the war. Whether slaves would have fought loyally for the rebel cause – in return for their freedom – must remain in doubt.



SUMMARY DIAGRAM

The African American war effort

2 Reconstruction 1865–77

Key question: To what extent were African Americans second-class citizens in the period 1865–77?

The outcome of the Civil War meant that slaves were freed. However, little had been done in the war to define and guarantee the position of African Americans in US society.

The situation 1865–6

Why did so many blacks have high expectations in 1865?

The situation in 1865 with regard to former slaves was far from clear cut:

- In January 1865, General Sherman declared that freed slaves should receive 40 acres of land and a surplus mule. Sherman was far from a humanitarian reformer: his main concern was to relieve the pressure caused by the large number of impoverished blacks following his army (see page 185). He stressed that Congress would have to agree to his plan. Nevertheless, his actions raised black expectations.
- By 1865, most Republican Congressmen favoured confiscating plantation land and redistributing it among freedmen and loyal whites. Such action would reward the deserving and punish the guilty. However, unable to agree on a precise measure, Congress failed to pass a redistribution bill.
- While some Northerners were anxious to help the ex-slaves, few believed that blacks were equal to whites. Indeed, many Northerners still had an antipathy to blacks and feared an exodus of ex-slaves to the North.
- Most border state whites had no wish to give blacks equal rights. Although Missouri and Maryland freed their slaves in 1864, Kentucky still had 65,000 blacks in bondage in April 1865. Its legislature opposed the Thirteenth Amendment and slavery survived in Kentucky until December 1865.
- During the war, a number of Northern states eliminated some of their discriminatory 'black laws'. Nevertheless, in 1865 only five free states allowed blacks to vote on equal terms with whites.
- In March 1865, Congress set up the Freedmen Bureau. Its aim was to help relieve the suffering of Southern blacks (and poor whites) by providing food, clothes and medical care. Although envisaged as a temporary measure, its creation symbolised the widespread Republican belief that the federal government should shoulder some responsibility for the freedmen's well-being.

Black expectations

In 1865, most blacks relished the opportunity to flaunt their liberty and enjoy its material benefits. Many walked off the plantations to test their freedom, to search for loved ones who had been sold, or to seek their fortunes. In the summer of 1865, black leaders organised mass meetings and petitions

demanding civil equality. Such demands were supported by thousands of blacks who had served in the Union army. Ex-soldiers, many literate thanks to army schools, often became the leaders of black political movements.

The fact that many blacks had great expectations (which might be difficult to realise) was one problem. The attitudes of Southern whites was another. The vast majority did not consider blacks to be their equals. Resentful and fearful of emancipated slaves, many were appalled at what they saw as black insubordination and a wave of violence raged almost unchecked in many parts of the South. Blacks were often assaulted and sometimes murdered for trying to leave plantations.

Presidential and Confederate Reconstruction

In 1865–66, there seemed few grounds for optimism for freedmen. White Southerners, appreciating that President Johnson had allowed them to shape their future, set about resurrecting as near as possible the old order (see page 215). No Southern state enfranchised blacks.

Black Codes

Determined to keep the freedmen under control, all Southern state governments introduced 'Black codes'. These varied from state to state but all were designed to ensure that blacks were treated as second-class citizens. Most states required blacks to possess labour contracts which provided written evidence of employment. These contracts were designed to keep black wages low. Those blacks who were unemployed or who broke the contracts could be forcibly set to work. Black 'vagrants' could be punished by involuntary plantation labour. Black children could be taken as apprentices and forcibly put to work. The Codes ensured that blacks were not allowed to buy or rent land, marry whites or serve on juries. They were also usually barred from poor relief, orphanages and schools. The Codes were enforced by a white judicial system that made little pretence of meting out justice fairly. Texas courts, for example, indicted some 500 whites for the murder of blacks in 1865–6; not one was convicted.

To what extent did freedmen benefit from Congressional Reconstruction?

The situation 1867–77

Congressional Reconstruction

Congress challenged President Johnson and introduced its own Reconstruction measures – measures which did much to protect the position of freedmen in the ex-Confederate states:

- A Civil Rights Bill (1866) aimed to guarantee minimal rights to blacks in the South (see page 217).
- The Fourteenth Amendment seemed to guarantee all citizens equality before the law (see page 217).
- The Fifteenth Amendment stated that 'The right to vote should not be denied … on account of race, color or previous condition of servitude' (see page 219).

Black political power

In the late 1860s and early 1870s, black Southerners wielded some political power:

- Large numbers of blacks joined the Union League, an important arm of the Republican Party in the South (see page 221).
- In the two decades after 1867, Southern blacks were elected to national, state and local office (see page 221).
- Black political influence never reflected black numbers (see page 222).

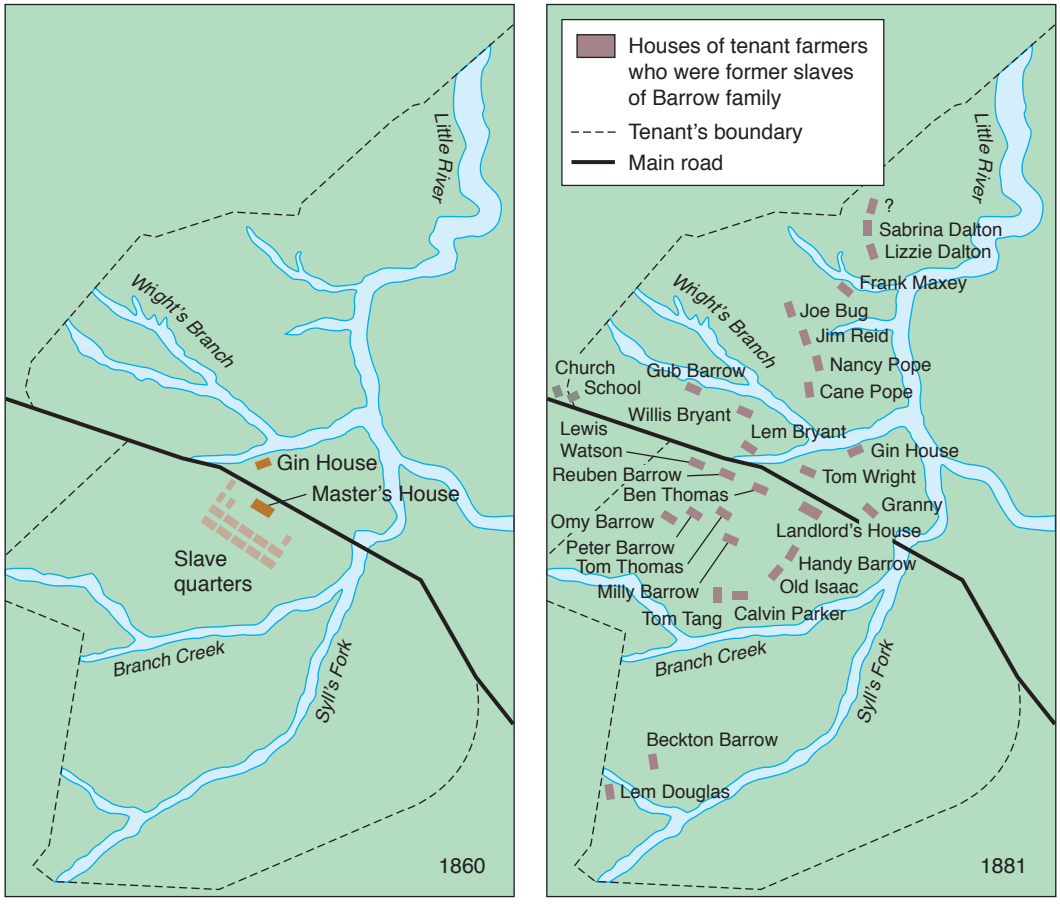
The economic situation

In 1865, blacks had hoped for 40 acres and a mule. This did not materialise. Little was done to break up the great plantations or even to share out the vast tracts of uncultivated land in the South.

What does Source A suggest about land division in the South? ?

SOURCE A

Changes on the Barrow Plantation from 1860 to 1881



During the 1870s, most blacks became sharecroppers. White landowners provided the land, seed and tools; black tenants supplied the labour. Whatever crop was produced was divided in a fixed ratio – often half to the landowner and half to the tenant. Sharecropping provided black farmers with freedom from day-to-day white supervision and some incentive to work hard. But neither the freedom nor the incentive should be exaggerated. Most of the sharecroppers' contracts were drawn up with a view to safeguarding the landlord's interests.

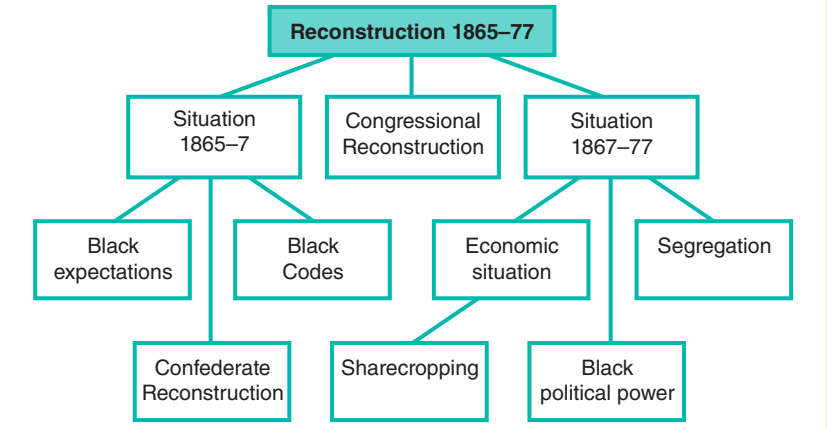
In the early 1870s, a world-wide glut of cotton led to a disastrous fall in prices which resulted in most sharecroppers being in a perpetual state of indebtedness to landowners and local storekeepers (see pages 223–4).

Segregation

In *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (1974), historian C. Vann Woodward argued that segregation was not imposed in the South until the 1890s. Before that, in Vann Woodward's view, there was 'an era of experimentation and variety in race relations'. This view is no longer accepted. Indeed, Vann Woodward himself conceded that segregation was the norm in most aspects of Southern life in the period 1865–77. Schools, churches, entertainment, housing and public facilities were effectively segregated in virtually every Southern state.

Segregation was not something which was always imposed on blacks by vindictive whites. Quite naturally, given their experience under slavery, many blacks had no wish to mix socially with whites. Like most American ethnic groups, they preferred to keep themselves to themselves. As a result, segregation was sometimes a statement of black community identity. After 1865, for example, there was an almost total black withdrawal from white churches as blacks tried to achieve self-determination. Churches, the first and perhaps the most important social institutions to be fully controlled by blacks, became a focal point of black life. Blacks also established their own welfare institutions, burial societies, Masonic lodges, temperance clubs, trade associations, political organisations and benevolent societies. The fact that there were black institutions, paralleling those of whites, meant there were opportunities for blacks to lead and manage.

After 1865, many black communities, committed to education, made great financial sacrifices, raising money to build their own schools and to pay teachers' salaries. At first many teachers were white Northern women – young and idealistic. But blacks wanted to control their own education and after 1870 most teachers in black schools and colleges were themselves black.



SUMMARY DIAGRAM

Reconstruction 1865–77

3 The South redeemed

Key question: How did the position of African Americans deteriorate after 1877?

By the late 1870s, every Southern state had been redeemed (see pages 226–30). The South was now controlled by Democratic or Bourbon regimes. Generally, they favoured reduced spending on a range of public services, including the school systems started during Reconstruction. This was bad news for African Americans.

The situation 1877–90

How anti-black were the Bourbon regimes pre-1890?

The political situation

The Bourbon governments did not immediately attack black political rights. Indeed, wealthy Bourbon leaders sought to attract black support by:

- appointing blacks to minor offices
- protecting the black right to vote against the attacks of white farmers (over whom the Bourbons had less control).

Thus, after 1877, there were more black officeholders in some states than there had been during Reconstruction. Blacks also continued to sit in some state legislatures and at least one African American Congressman was returned in every election down to 1900 (except that in 1886).

Nevertheless, under the Bourbons, to ensure white control, blacks were often disfranchised. This was usually the result of fraud or intimidation.

Black civil rights

In schools, churches and places of residence, segregation had been the norm during Reconstruction. But in hotels and theatres and on railroads and streetcars there was no uniform pattern in the 1880s. In some places segregation prevailed; in others, especially in the cities, blacks and whites shared facilities on an equal basis. It was still common practice, for example, for trains to have first- and second-class cars, which afforded a degree of racial segregation by the difference in costs.

However, a number of Supreme Court decisions deprived blacks of the guarantee of equal treatment which the Fourteenth Amendment and the Civil Rights Acts of 1866 and 1875 had sought to confer:

- In 1875, the Court decided that the Fourteenth Amendment protected the rights and privileges of citizens only when they were infringed by the action of a state.
- In 1883, the Court ruled that the Civil Rights Act of 1875 (see page 227) was unconstitutional.

Both decisions meant in effect that the federal government had no authority to protect blacks against discrimination by private individuals.

How were blacks deprived of the vote?

Disfranchisement

During the 1890s, white attitudes hardened:

- Many racist whites believed that blacks were 'retrogressing' towards bestiality, especially younger blacks who had not known slavery.
- Bourbons, alarmed at the attempts of **Populist** leaders to unite poor farmers of both races against them, acquiesced to the demands of poor white racists for an end to black voting.

Southern whites found ways to subvert the Fifteenth Amendment. Mississippi showed the way in 1890 by adopting elaborate suffrage qualifications including:

- the payment of a poll tax: those who did not pay (or were not recorded as paying) could not vote
- residential requirements, which struck at black tenants who moved annually in search of bettering themselves
- a literacy test, so administered as to disqualify blacks.

Over the next decade other Southern states passed similar laws. There was little protest from the North. Indeed, in 1898 the Supreme Court in *Mississippi* v. *Williams* placed its seal of approval on state laws designed to disfranchise blacks.

Almost at a stroke the number of black voters was reduced to a handful. Louisiana, for example, had 130,344 registered black voters in 1896; it had only 5,320 in 1900.

KEY TERM

Populist/Populism
A political movement that was strong in the West, Mid-west and South in the final third of the nineteenth century. It drew support particularly from struggling farmers who wanted to introduce more money into the economy and regulate banks, railway companies and big business.

Poll taxes and literacy tests had the further consequence (in part intended) of disfranchising not only blacks but also many whites as well. To provide a loophole for poor whites, many Southern states followed Louisiana and introduced a 'grandfather clause', giving the vote to all male adults whose fathers or grandfathers had voted before 1867.

In some respects, more significant than the technical devices for black disfranchisement was the futility of trying to overcome them. The literacy test never had much to do with literacy. It was simply a device that could be used to exclude blacks.

Jim Crow laws

How important were the Jim Crow laws?

Jim Crow segregation accompanied disfranchisement. The symbolic target at first was the railway train. In 1888, Mississippi required passengers, under penalty of law, to occupy the car set aside for their race. When Louisiana followed suit in 1890, the law was challenged in the case *Plessy* v. *Ferguson,* which the Supreme Court decided in 1896. The Court decided that segregation was fair provided that blacks and whites had equal facilities.

The sole dissenter was John Marshall Harlan, a former slaveholder from Kentucky. 'In my opinion', Harlan wrote, 'the judgement this day rendered will, in time, prove to be quite as pernicious as the decision made by this tribunal in the Dred Scott Case' (see pages 92–3). The Plessy ruling, he predicted, would 'stimulate aggressions, more or less brutal, upon the admitted rights of colored citizens'.

In *Cumming* v. *Board of Education* of Richmond County (1899), the Supreme Court extended the principle of 'separate but equal' to schools. The Northern-dominated Supreme Court did not necessarily approve of Southern segregation. It simply thought there was little it could do to end it. Its aim was not to ensure that blacks were treated as second-class citizens. Instead, it hoped to end the unequal treatment of Southern blacks. Separate schools were infinitely preferable to no schools at all. Segregation is not necessarily the same as discrimination. However, in the South, segregation was accompanied by discrimination.

The Supreme Court's decisions set the pattern of race relations in the South for the next 50 years. The principle of segregation was systematically extended by state and local law to every area of Southern life: streetcars, parks, theatres, hotels, hospitals, even cemeteries. To some extent the **Jim Crow laws** simply gave legal sanction to prevailing practices. But they were more comprehensive and rigid, and more strictly enforced than anything that had gone before.

KEY TERM

Jim Crow laws Segregation laws, passed in Southern states in the 1890s.

The situation by 1900

Were African Americans worse off in 1900 than in 1865?

By 1900 blacks were regarded – and treated – by most whites as second-class citizens. Black facilities were generally markedly inferior to white. Blacks

were more likely to be illiterate, more likely to live in wretched housing and more likely to suffer from malnutrition.

They were also taught to know their place. Savage punishments were meted out to blacks who committed petty crime and blacks were all but excluded from the machinery of law enforcement. There was considerable intimidation – physical, psychological and economic.

KEY TERM

Lynching The judging and putting to death of people without the usual forms of law. Lynchings were invariably carried out by mobs of white people.

Lynching

Lynchings were a common aspect of Southern (and Western) life in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the West lynching was often the result of the absence or weakness of the law. In the South it was resorted to in defiance of law, often after trial and conviction, in order to gratify mob passions. In the period 1889–99, 82 per cent of the USA's 1,875 lynchings took place in the South: 68 per cent of victims were black. In the period 1899–1909, 92 per cent of lynchings were Southern: 89 per cent of victims were black. Scenes of barbarity often accompanied Southern lynchings. Torture, mutilation and burning at the stake were among the horrors perpetrated by lynch mobs on their victims. (The fact that some of those who were lynched had been found guilty of – often horrendous – crimes should perhaps be noted, but this clearly does not excuse the brutality of lynching.)

Black leaders

Some black leaders, most notably Booker T. Washington, accepted the fact that blacks were second-class citizens. Washington argued that blacks must seek to better themselves through education and hard work. Only by so doing could they prove their worth to white Americans. Given white attitudes, Washington thought that blacks had little alternative but slow, steady improvement. While Washington's faith in education was shared by many Southern blacks, some Northern blacks were bitterly critical of Washington. W.E.B. Du Bois argued forcefully in favour of blacks defying segregation and discrimination.

SOURCE B

A Southern lynching in Texas, Paris 1893



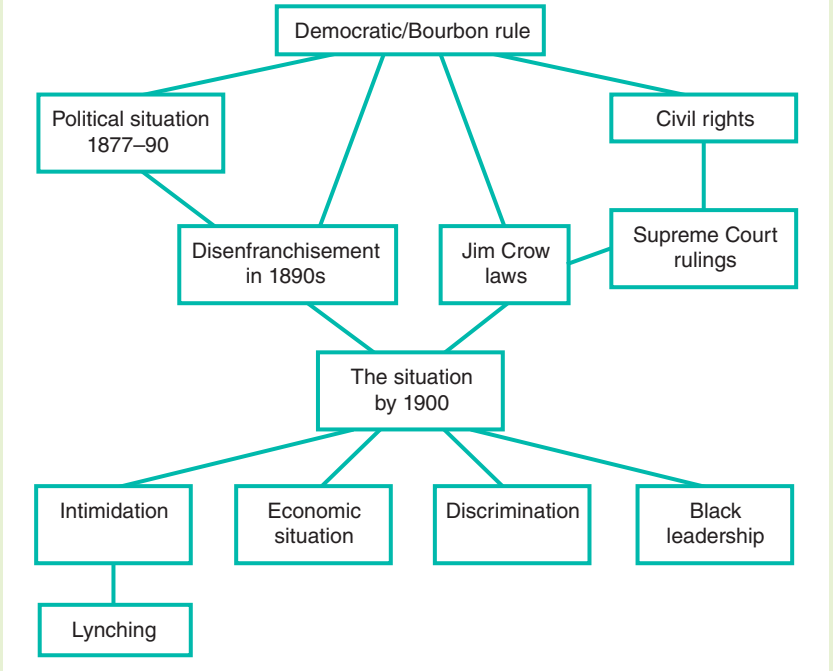
? Why might the photograph in Source B have been taken?

The economic situation

In 1900, most blacks were still tied to the cotton fields, in a condition of dependence which was not far removed from medieval serfdom. Those who moved to cities (the proportion of black urban-dwellers more than doubled between 1870 and 1910) found themselves restricted to the more menial and less well-paid occupations.

Nevertheless, the notion that African Americans were hardly better off than they had been under slavery is probably mistaken:

- There was a major improvement in black living standards in the 40 years after 1865 and a corresponding reduction in black mortality rates.
- Black land-ownership increased. By 1900, nearly a fifth of black farmers owned their land.
- Black businesses grew, particularly those catering for black customers. This was one of the – few – advantages of segregation.
- The number of black professional people grew.



SUMMARY DIAGRAM

The South redeemed

4 Key debate

Key question: *Was Reconstruction a tragic failure?*

In the early twentieth century, white historians, such as Professor W.A. Dunning, saw Reconstruction as 'the tragic era' – a dreadful time when Southerners suffered the indignity of military occupation, when the South was ruled by incompetent, corrupt governments, and when blacks, unprepared for freedom, proved incapable of exercising the political rights which the North thrust upon them. In Dunning's view the Reconstruction heroes were President Johnson, who tried to continue Lincoln's policies, white Southern Democrats and their Ku Klux Klan allies, who waged a forceful campaign to redeem the South. The villains were the vindictive radical Republicans, scalawags and carpetbaggers.

In the 1950s and 1960s, historians such as Kenneth Stampp and John Hope Franklin depicted Reconstruction very differently. 'Rarely in history', said Stampp, 'have the participants in an unsuccessful rebellion endured penalties as mild as those Congress imposed upon the people of the South and particularly upon their leaders.' In Stampp's opinion, the villains were Johnson, white Democrats and the Klan. The heroes were the radical Republicans and black freedmen who fought nobly (but ultimately unsuccessfully) for the rights of ex-slaves. In this view, black, not white, Southerners were the real losers of Reconstruction.

Currently the vast majority of historians agree with the Stampp–Franklin view rather than with the Dunning view. However, more recently Eric Foner has stressed that a great deal was achieved for – and by – African Americans in the Reconstruction process of the late 1860s and early 1870s.

The treatment of Southern whites

Given the scale of the Civil War, the North was remarkably generous to Southern whites. Most Southerners, even those who had held high office under the Confederacy, were quickly pardoned. Only one man, Henry Wirtz, held responsible for the horrors of Andersonville prison camp (see page 133), was executed for war crimes. Jefferson Davis spent two years in prison but was then freed. Slavery apart, there was no major confiscation of property. For decades to come, the Democrat Party, the political agency of white supremacy, controlled the South.

The treatment of ex-slaves

The main debate about Reconstruction has been its impact on the ex-slaves.

Economic failure?

Critics claim that blacks came out of slavery with little or no land. By the 1870s, most blacks eked out a living as sharecroppers. Perpetually in debt, they had little economic independence.

However, historians have recently been rather more positive about Reconstruction's economic impact. Sharecropping was a significant improvement over slavery. After 1865, black living standards improved and blacks steadily increased the amount of land they farmed. With the end of slavery, blacks also had mobility. Many moved to Southern cities: between 1865 and 1870, the black population of the South's ten largest cities doubled. While most blacks remained in the South, some moved to Northern cities or out West.

Civil rights failure?

A second major criticism of Reconstruction is that it failed to guarantee civil rights. By the first decade of the twentieth century, blacks were regarded and treated by most whites as second-class citizens. Segregation was the norm in most aspects of Southern life. However, segregation was not something which was simply imposed on blacks by whites. Many blacks had no wish to mix socially with whites. Thus segregation was sometimes a statement of black community identity.

Political failure?

By 1900, Southern state governments had introduced a variety of measures to ensure that blacks were unable to vote. However, disfranchisement did not occur on a major scale until the 1890s. For most of the 1870s and 1880s, blacks voted in large numbers and were appointed to public office. Historian Eric Foner claims that black participation in Southern political life after 1867 was 'a massive experiment in interracial democracy without precedent in the history of this or any other country that abolished slavery in the nineteenth century'.

Conclusion

Reconstruction was far from a total failure. The essential fact was that blacks were no longer slaves. Most left slavery with a rather more realistic opinion of what was achievable than many later historians. If Reconstruction did not create an integrated society, it did establish the concept of equal citizenship. If blacks did not emerge from Reconstruction as equal citizens, at least the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments were enshrined in the Constitution and could be invoked by later generations of civil rights activists.

Chapter summary

African Americans in the Civil War and the New South

The role of African Americans in the Civil War and in the New South is complex. African Americans had more control over their destiny than historians once imagined. They played an important role in the Civil War itself, helping the Union to triumph. Their actions encouraged Lincoln to support emancipation and Republicans to support civil rights for African Americans. Although African American expectations and aspirations in 1865 were not attained, especially economically, there were achievements on the political and social fronts. Unfortunately these achievements did not survive the end of Reconstruction in the 1870s. Much of what had been gained in the New South was lost in the 1880s and 1890s when most African Americans became second-class citizens. The political leaders of the 1860s did not have crystal balls: it is somewhat unfair to hold them responsible for events that occurred a generation later.

Examination advice

How to answer 'assess' questions

Questions that ask you to assess are similar to those that ask you to evaluate (see page 79). You must make judgements that you can support with evidence, reasons and explanations. It is important for you to demonstrate why your own assessment is better than alternative ones.

Example

Assess the impact of the Black Codes and Jim Crow laws on the economic and social status of African Americans.

1. For this question you need to discuss exactly what impact the Black Codes and the Jim Crow laws had on African Americans. You should focus on both the economic and social status of African Americans and not on their political situation.
2. First, take at least five minutes to write a short outline. In your outline, you could make a chart that would illustrate the impact of Black Codes and Jim Crow laws on the economic and social status of African Americans. An example of how you could do this is given on the following page.

	Black Codes	Jim Crow laws
Social impact	Blacks were treated as second-class citizens. Blacks could not buy or rent land. Blacks could not marry whites. Blacks were barred from schools and orphanages.	Blacks were treated as second-class citizens. Segregation became the rule: separate schools, parks, hotels, streetcars, hospitals and cemeteries. Racial divisions supported by laws continued the development of two societies, one white and more prosperous and one black with few opportunities for advancement.
Economic impact	Blacks had to have labour contracts. Unemployed blacks or those without contracts could be forced to work. Black wages were kept low. Blacks were often forced to work as sharecroppers. Blacks were in a perpetual state of indebtedness to landowners.	Most blacks remained as poorly paid agricultural workers. Because of the poor quality of institutions that were allowed to educate blacks, fewer opportunities existed for them. Growth of small-scale black enterprises that could only cater to blacks.

3 Your introduction should define what the Black Codes and Jim Crow laws were. If possible, use appropriate dates. Next, briefly explain the impact of both on the economic **and** social status of African Americans that you are going to assess in the body of the essay.

4 In the body of your essay, explain fully what the impact of the two sets of laws had on both the economic and social status of African Americans. You might choose to separate the two distinct sets of laws. Half of your essay could be on the Black Codes and half on the Jim Crow laws. Try to avoid blanket statements that state that both were terrible. However true that might be, a successful essay will discuss, with supporting evidence, degrees of severity or impact on the African American community. Furthermore, an excellent essay will include why and how the Black Codes and Jim Crow laws developed. This would be a good example of your understanding of historical processes.

5 In the conclusion, you should tie together the ideas you have explored and come to a judgement about how much impact the Black Codes and Jim Crow laws had. An example is given below.

The impact of both the Black Codes and the Jim Crow laws was deep. What little freedom blacks won as a result of the Civil War and Reconstruction was taken from them steadily. Many hundreds of thousands remained tied to the land they once worked as slaves and there was little opportunity for economic advancement. Socially, African Americans were made into second-class and separated citizens as the codes and laws took effect.

6 Now try writing a complete answer to the question following the advice above.



Examination practice

Below are three exam-style questions for you to practise on this topic.

1 Assess the contributions African Americans made to the Union's war effort.

2 'African American participation was a key factor in the North's victory.' To what extent do you agree with this statement?
(For guidance on how to answer 'to what extent' questions, see page 160.)

3 Explain the 'legal' methods white Southerners used to overturn the gains ex-slaves had made after the Civil War.
(For guidance on how to answer 'explain' questions, see page 116.)

Timeline

1793	Invention of the cotton 'gin'
1808	USA declared African slave trade illegal
1820	Missouri Compromise
1833	Formation of National Anti-Slavery Society
1846	**May** Start of Mexican War
	August Wilmot Proviso
1848	Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo
1850	The 1850 Compromise
1854	Kansas–Nebraska Act
1857	Dred Scott decision
1858	Lincoln–Douglas debates
1859	John Brown's raid
1860	**November** Lincoln elected president **December** South Carolina seceded
1861	**January/February** Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana and Texas seceded **February** Confederacy established **April** Confederate forces opened fire on Fort Sumter **April–June** Virginia, Arkansas, North Carolina and Tennessee seceded **July** First Manassas
1862	**April** Battle of Shiloh **June–July** Seven Day battles **August** Second Manassas
	September Battle of Antietam **September** Emancipation Proclamation **December** Battle of Fredericksburg
1863	**May** Battle of Chancellorsville **July** Battle of Gettysburg **July** Capture of Vicksburg **September** Battle of Chickamauga
1864	**May–June** Wilderness–Petersburg campaign **September** Fall of Atlanta **November** Lincoln re-elected president
1865	**April** Lee surrendered at Appomattox **April** Lincoln assassinated: Andrew Johnson became president **December** Thirteenth Amendment added to the Constitution
1866	Civil Rights Act
1867	Military Reconstruction Act
1868	Fourteenth Amendment added to the Constitution
1870	Fifteenth Amendment added to the Constitution
1877	1877 Compromise

Glossary

Abolitionism The desire to end slavery.

Abolitionist Someone who wanted to end slavery in the USA.

Agrarian Relating to land and farming.

American Dream The idea that the American way of life offers the prospect of economic and social success to every individual.

Ante-bellum The time before the war.

Arsenal A place where military supplies are stored or made.

Battleground state A state, usually evenly politically divided, whose voters might well determine an election's outcome.

Belligerent A combatant, recognised in British law, as legally waging war.

Billy Yank Union soldiers' nickname.

Blockade-runners Ships, mainly built in Britain (and manned mainly by British seamen), which tried to evade the Union warships blockading Southern ports in an effort to trade with the Confederacy.

Border states The states between the North and the lower South, for example Kentucky, Maryland, Tennessee and Missouri. These states supported slavery but were not committed to secession.

Bourbon A derogatory term given to Southern Democratic administrations by their opponents. In nineteenth-century France, Bourbons were supporters of the French royal family who wished to restore the old regime and sought to perpetuate ancient values.

Call to Arms A presidential order calling up troops.

Capitalistic Concerned essentially with making money.

Carpetbaggers Northern whites who settled in the South. (A carpetbag was the suitcase of the time.)

Confederate Supporter of the Southern states that seceded from the Union in 1861.

Confederate socialism The Richmond government's attempts to control the Confederate economy.

Contraband of war Goods which can be confiscated from the enemy.

Crimean War In 1854, Britain and France went to war against Russia to protect Turkey. Most of the war, which lasted until 1856, was fought in the area of Russia known as the Crimea.

'Cult of domesticity' The notion that women's place was in the home.

Declaration of Independence Thirteen American colonies declared independence from Britain on 4 July 1776.

Democratic A form of government in which ultimate power is vested in the people and their elected representatives.

Draft evaders Those who avoided conscription.

Draft exemptions Workers in key industries did not have to serve in the armed forces.

Egalitarian A society in which people are equal.

Esprit de corps Loyalty to, and confidence in, something.

Evangelical/Evangelism A passionate belief in Christianity and a desire to share that belief with others.

Federal A government in which several states, while largely independent in home affairs, combine for national purposes.

Federal government The national government.

Federalist Party In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Federalists and Republicans were the two main parties. The Federalist Party supported the Constitution and federal power.

Feudal hierarchy A system of social organisation prevalent in Western Europe in the Middle Ages. People held a range of positions within a rigid class system.

Filibuster A military adventure, aimed at overthrowing a government.

'Fire-eaters' Southerners who wanted to leave the Union.

Founding Fathers The men who drew up the Constitution in 1787.

Freedmen Men and women who had once been slaves.

Freeport Doctrine The opinion that voters in a territory could exclude slavery by refusing to enact laws that gave legal protection to slaveholders, thus effectively invalidating the Dred Scott ruling.

Gone with the Wind This novel, written by Margaret Mitchell (a Southerner), was published in 1936. It sold over 10 million copies and was made into a successful film. Both book and film suggested that the ante-bellum South was a civilised society.

'Great experiment' Americans saw themselves as doing things differently from, and more successfully than, the rest of the world. The USA was thus an example for other countries to follow.

Guerrilla war A type of warfare in which small bands of men, often not regular troops, harass enemy forces (for example by attacking outposts, patrols and supply lines) and then return to homes and hideouts until called out to fight again.

Impeached/impeachment The process by which a president who has been found guilty of grave offences by Congress can be removed from office.

Impressing Forcing into government service.

Impressment of supplies Confiscation of goods.

Inaugural address A president's first speech, made immediately after he has been sworn in as president.

Inflationary pressure An increase in the quantity of money in circulation, resulting in a decline in its value.

Ironclad warship A ship made of iron or protected by iron plates.

Jim Crow laws Segregation laws, passed in Southern states in the 1890s.

Johnny Reb Confederate soldiers' nickname.

'King Cotton' Cotton was so important to the American economy that it became known as 'King Cotton'. 'No power on earth dares to make war on cotton', declared Senator James Hammond in 1858. 'Cotton is king'.

Laird rams The distinguishing feature of these vessels was an iron ram, projecting from the bow, which enabled them to sink an enemy by smashing its hull.

Liberal Republican This was a new party which came into existence in 1872, largely because of dissatisfaction with Grant. While some major Northern Republican figures joined the party, it had little support from Republican rank and file. The party quickly disappeared after 1872.

Louisiana Purchase Territory The huge area bought from France in 1803.

Lynching The judging and putting to death of people without the usual forms of law. Lynchings were invariably carried out by mobs of white people.

Manifest destiny The USA's God-given right to take over North America.

Manumission The granting of freedom to slaves.

Martial law The suspension of ordinary administration and policing and, in its place, the exercise of military authority.

Merchant marine Ships involved in trade, not war.

Militia draft Conscription of men in the state militias.

Minié ball An inch-long lead ball that expanded into the groove of the rifle-musket's barrel.

Mobilisation The business of preparing a country for war, for example, calling up troops and supplying them with weapons and training.

Mormons Members of a religious sect, founded in the 1820s by Joseph Smith.

Muzzle-loading Loaded down the barrel.

Nativist/nativism Suspicion of immigrants.

Ordinance A regulation or law.

Ordnance Bureau The government agency responsible for acquiring war materials.

Ordnance Chief The person who led the department responsible for the deployment and distribution of weapons and munitions.

Paternalistic A system akin to that of a family, whereby a father looks after and cares for his children.

Patronage The giving of jobs or privileges to supporters.

Peculiar institution White Southerners referred to slavery as their 'peculiar' institution. By this they meant that it was special to – and characteristic of – their region.

Plantation agriculture Sugar, rice, tobacco and cotton were grown on large Southern estates.

Planters Men who owned plantations with twenty or more slaves.

Platform The publicly declared principles and intentions of a political party.

Polygamy The practice of having more than one wife.

Populist/Populism A political movement that was strong in the West, Midwest and South in the final third of the nineteenth century. It drew support particularly from struggling farmers who wanted to introduce more money into the economy and regulate banks, railway companies and big business.

Posse A group of men called out by a sheriff or marshal to aid in enforcing the law.

Postmaster The person in charge of a local post office, an important position given the process of communication in the mid-nineteenth century.

Potato famine In 1845–6, the Irish potato crop was hit by blight – a fungus which destroyed the crop. The result was a terrible famine.

Proviso A provision or condition, added to a proposed bill.

Rebel armies Confederates were called rebels or 'rebs' by Union forces.

Redeem To restore to white rule.

Republican A form of government without a monarch (or someone who supports such a government).

The Republicans The Republicans (not to be confused with the 1850s, party of the same name) opposed the Federalists. They tended to support states' rights. The first Republican Party, at least in name, effectively disappeared after 1816.

Saltpetre Potassium nitrate – a vital ingredient of gunpowder.

Scalawags Southern whites who supported the Republican Party.

Secede To leave or quit.

Second party system The period from the mid-1830s to the mid-1850s when the Democrats and Whigs were the two main parties.

Segregation The system whereby blacks and whites are separated from each other (for example, in schools) on grounds of race.

Slave Power A Northern term for the political influence of the South and the (perceived) dominance of slaveholding planter-politicians in Washington.

Slave Power conspiracy A Northern notion that Southerners were plotting to expand slavery.

Sovereignty Supreme power.

State militia Able-bodied men of military age who could be called up to fight by a state in an emergency.

Strike breakers Workers employed to do the work of those on strike.

Tariffs Customs duties on imported goods.

Temperance Opposition to the drinking of alcohol.

Territories Areas that had not yet become states and which were still under federal government control.

Total war A war in which both sides try to employ all their manpower and material resources to defeat the enemy, thus affecting the lives of virtually all citizens.

War Democrats Those Democrats who were determined to see the war fought to a successful conclusion.

War of attrition A conflict where each side tries to wear down the strength, morale and/or resources of the enemy.

West Point The main US military academy.

Writ of habeas corpus The right of a person to know why he or she has been arrested.

Yankees Americans who live in the Northern, as opposed to the Southern, states.

Further reading

General texts

A. Goodheart, 1861: *The Civil War Awakening*, Knopf, 2011
A well-received re-examination of the causes of the Civil War.

J.M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, Penguin, 1988
The best one-volume survey of the causes and course of the Civil War.

J. M. McPherson, *Ordeal by Fire: The Civil War and Reconstruction*, McGraw-Hill, 1992
Another excellent work by McPherson. (Everything he writes is excellent!)

D.M. Potter, with D. Fehrenbacher, *The Impending Crisis 1846–61*, Harper and Row, 1976
Still an essential text on the causes of the war.

R.M. Sewell, *A House Divided: Sectionalism and Civil War, 1848–1865*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988
A short and succinct account of both the causes and course of the war.

Books on slavery and abolitionism

J.W. Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South*, OUP, 1979
This book, like several others, stresses the theme of a persisting and identifiable slave culture.

S.M. Elkins, *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life*, University of Chicago Press, 1959
A bit long in the tooth but still raises some important issues.

D.F. Ericson, *The Debate over Slavery: Antislavery and Proslavery Liberalism in Antebellum America*, New York University Press, 2000
This deals with the contemporary debate about slavery and the Slave Power.

R.W. Fogel and S.L. Engerman, *Time on the Cross*: *The Economics of American Negro Slavery*, University Press of America, 1974
Beware of statistics!

E.D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made*, Random House, 1974
An important book, albeit its framework is Marxist.

K. Greenberg (ed), *Nat Turner: A Slave Rebellion in History and Memory*, Oxford, 2004
Historians re-examine the controversial legacy of Nat Turner.

P.J. Parish, Slavery: *History and Historians*, Icon Editions, 1989
This provides a splendid overview of the main debates about slavery.

U.B. Phillips, *American Negro Slavery*, Louisiana State University Press, 1969

K.M. Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-bellum South*, Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1956
This remains an essential text.

J.B. Stewart, *Holy Warriors: The Abolitionists and American Slavery*, Hill and Wang, 1976
A solid introduction to the abolitionist movement.

Books on US politics 1846–61

W.E. Gienapp, *The Origins of the Republican Party*, OUP, 1987
This provides the most detailed account of the rise of the Republican Party.

M. Holt, *The Fate of Their Country: Politicians, Slavery Extension, and the Coming of Civil War*, Hill & Wang, 2005
This book distils the wisdom of several of Holt's vast books about the politics of the 1840s and 1850s into an incisive, short overview.

E.B. Smith, *The Presidency of James Buchanan*, University Press of Kansas, 1975
A good introduction to Buchanan's troubled presidency.

K.M. Stampp, *America in 1857*, OUP, 1990
A readable snapshot of a momentous year (in Stampp's view).

Biographies

R. Carwardine, *Lincoln: A Life of Purpose and Power*, Random House, 2006
A more analytical account of Lincoln's life and works.

D.H. Donald, *Lincoln*, Jonathan Cape, 1995
A very good single-volume biography of Lincoln.

E. Foner, *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery*, Norton, 2011
An in-depth examination of Lincoln's struggle with slavery.

W.S. McFeely, *Grant*, Norton, 1981
Perhaps the best biography of Grant.

P.S. Paludan, *The Presidency of Abraham Lincoln*, University of Kansas, 1994
A succinct analysis of all aspects of Lincoln's work as president.

E.M. Thomas, *Robert E. Lee*, Norton, 1981
Perhaps the best biography of Lee.

Books on military aspects of the Civil War

R.E. Beringer, H. Hattaway, A.Jones and W.N. Still, *Why the South Lost the Civil War*, University of Georgia Press, 1986
An interesting (if not convincing) interpretation of why the Confederacy lost.

R.N. Current (ed), *The Encyclopedia of the Confederacy* (4 vols), Simon and Schuster, 1993
A collection of essays on every conceivable topic and person by the best historians.

D. Donald (ed), *Why the North Won the Civil War,* Collier, 1960
A superb collection of essays providing different explanations for the war's outcome.

D.G. Faust, *The Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War*, Alfred A. Knopf, 2008
This book deals with the soldiers' experience of combat and death.

S. Foote, *The Civil War,* Pimlico, 1958–74
This three-volumed work, while too long for most students, is a tremendous read.

G. Gallagher, *The Confederate War,* Harvard University Press, 1997
This book has eminently sensible things to say about Confederate morale.

G.W. Gallagher, S.D. Engle, R. K. Krick and J.T. Glatthaar, *The American Civil War: This Mighty Scourge of War*, Osprey Publishing, 2003
A lucid and concise narrative of the main campaigns, as well as penetrating analyses of strategies and leadership.

J.M. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War*, OUP, 1997
An important book examining why Northerners and Southerners fought and died for their respective causes.

G.C. Ward (with R. Burns and K. Burns), *The Civil War: An Illustrated History*, Alfred A. Knopf, 1990
This book accompanied Burns' splendid television documentary. It is magnificently illustrated.

B. I. Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb: The Common Soldier of the Confederacy*, Bobbs-Merrill, 1943
This remains an excellent book on the experience of Civil War soldiers, along with its twin *The Life of Billy Yank: The Common Soldier of the Union*.

Books on the Union and Confederate home fronts

P.S. Paludan, *A People's Contest: The Union and Civil War 1861–1865*, Harper and Row, 1988
A good survey of the impact of the war on Northern society.

G.C. Rable, *Civil Wars: Women and the Crisis of Southern Nationalism*, University of Illinois Press, 1989
This considers Southern women's role in the conflict.

Britain and the Civil War

A. Foreman, *A World on Fire,* Allen Lane, 2010
A good read, as well as a good account of British involvement in the Civil War.

Primary material

H.S. Commager (ed), *The Blue and the Gray,* Wings Books, 1950
A tremendous collection of primary source material.

R.U. Johnson and C.C. Buel (eds), *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War* (4 vols), Castle, 1887
The fact that the four volumes are still in print speaks volumes.

Work Projects Administration, *Slave Narratives: A Folk History of Slavery in the United States from Interviews with Former Slaves, Georgia Narratives, Part 1*, Hard Press, 2006
Fascinating interviews with former slaves conducted in the 1930s.

Books on Reconstruction and the African American experience of war

I. Berlin (et al.), *Slaves No More*, CUP, 1992
A concise summary of a two-volumed work on emancipation.

D.A. Blackmon, *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II*, Knopf, 2009
A ground-breaking study of what African Americans in the South faced after the Civil War.

E.F. Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution 1863–1877*, Harper and Row, 1988
Remains the best book on Reconstruction.

M. Penman, *Struggle for Mastery: Disfranchisement in the South, 1888–1908*, UNC Press, 2001
An important book dealing with an important issue.

R.L. Ransom and R. Sutch, *One Kind of Freedom: The Economic Consequences of Emancipation*, CUP, 2001
A clear and lucid examination of the economic consequences of emancipation.

C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, OUP, 1974
This small book, once very influential, is somewhat dated but still worth a read.

Internet resources

- Interviews with former slaves can be found at www.gutenberg.org/files/11255/11255-h/11255-h.htm
- A massive Civil War portal with thousands of links: www.civil-war.net
- A decent site for primary sources: www.civilwar.org/education/history/primarysources
- The Library of Congress has many online sources. A good starting point for research would be: www.loc.gov/topics/content.php?subcat=8
- One can also search the archives of the *New York Times* for contemporary accounts of the Civil War. See: www.nytimes.com

Internal assessment

The internal assessment is a historical investigation on a historical topic. Below is a list of possible topics on the United States Civil War that could warrant further investigation. They have been organised by chapter theme.

Chapter 2: The cotton economy and slavery

1. Why did Nat Turner's rebellion fail?
2. To what extent did Eli Whitney's cotton gin reinvigorate slavery?

Chapter 3: The origins of the Civil War

1. Compare and contrast the economic status of freedmen in slave and free states.
2. Why did the North's industry develop at a much faster rate than the South's in the first half of the nineteenth century?

Chapter 4: The abolitionist debate

1. To what extent were the Quakers successful in spreading the gospel of abolitionism?
2. How effective was the Fugitive Slave Act?
3. Examine the impact of Frederick Douglass's Irish and English tour.

Chapter 5: The coming of war

1. How was John Brown's raid at Harper's Ferry portrayed in the press?
2. Why did South Carolina attack Fort Sumter?

Chapter 6: Union versus Confederacy: the war 1861–5

1. What were the causes of the New York City Draft Riots?
2. Compare and contrast the provisioning of Union and Confederate soldiers.

Chapter 7: The battles: 1861–5

1. How successful were Confederate blockade runners?
2. Analyse the factors which led to Great Britain's decision to remain neutral in the Civil War.

Chapter 8: Reconstruction

1. To what extent was the Freedmen's Bureau a success?
2. Why did the United States military pull out of the South in 1877?

Chapter 9: African Americans in the Civil War and the New South

1. Why were Black Codes instituted in Mississippi in 1865?
2. Why did Justice John Marshall Harlan dissent in the *Plessy* v. *Ferguson* decision?

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